

Supply

relates to adoption. It will be part of the report we shall be releasing for discussion in the future.

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Chairman, do I have time for a brief question or two? I would like to return to my opening observations with respect to the programs the minister and his colleagues have in mind for the longer term. Can the minister tell us what is the long-term strategy for correcting underemployment and unemployment in Atlantic Canada, apart from the programs we heard mentioned ad nauseam on Friday and today?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, I thought the member would end his remarks with an easy question. It would be less than forthcoming of me to say that at this point that work is being done in the government on the idea of a national industrial strategy which would have its own regional breakdowns. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is the lead minister in developing that program. What we are attempting to do through our own work in the labour market is to determine what the employment-unemployment situation might be over a period of time. There have been some reasonably positive signs as trends are measured, that is, in the last year or two, that the unemployment rate in the maritimes has begun to fall. There is an increase in economic growth in certain parts of that region. There is obviously a great expectation that with new discoveries in the offshore areas in oil and gas and the prosperity of the fishing industry there will be an increased demand for workers.

Right now we are trying to develop training programs in the Atlantic provinces which are suitable for those new job requirements and the new supply requirements which we see forthcoming in the next four or five years. We have had some very serious discussions with manpower and labour ministers in the maritime provinces with respect to that. We shall be negotiating with the provincial ministers during the coming year as we renegotiate the occupational training legislation to ensure that as far as our own department is concerned we shall be in a position to work with them to put in place the right kinds of programs to meet those new demands. There is a real prospect for substantial changes in the maritimes in terms of increased employment growth. It could be one of the faster employment growth areas in the country.

Mr. Forrestall: I see my time is running out but I would like to ask the minister with respect to retraining whether there is a retraining program in Atlantic Canada in the petrochemical industry. The minister has a puzzled look on his face. I would like to suggest to him that his colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, has told Canadians in Atlantic Canada on two separate occasions, that we have a snowball's chance in hell of getting a petrochemical industry in the Strait of Canso—it is going to Gros Cacouna. The minister of energy ducks these questions in the House, as does the minister responsible for regional economic development. He will deny that this was said and that was said. But members of the press have overheard the comments and they are not, in my view, fabricators or distortionists with respect to the truth. My

question is: what is going to replace this last opportunity to use our provincial resources, for any practical purposes? I am talking about our ability to derive economic benefit from those resources by way of job opportunities and the possibility of developing a viable petrochemical industry for the offshore market, for the Third World—South America, Africa and Asia. We have lost that opportunity in Atlantic Canada, watching it slip through our fingers because of the overwhelming pressure of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who has the guts to go ahead and do what he believes in doing, regardless of the effect it has on Atlantic Canada. But what is going to replace it? I let the minister demonstrate to me why I should have faith in the free due process. Let him tell me that he is training people to work in the petrochemical industry and then I will believe that the National Energy Board has the freedom to make a decision with respect to the location of the LNG terminal, the regasification terminal. Tell me that and I will believe it. But the minister cannot do that. What will we do? Are we to be hewers of wood for the rest of our lives? Ministers over there talk about great opportunities but it takes seven or eight years to put a pipeline in place and get oil and gas through it. Do they know what we are? We are watchers of a pipeline carrying our resources to Quebec and to central Canada. Do something that demonstrates concern about us. We hear about these ad hoc programs. They just drive us further into isolation.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but unless he wishes to seek the unanimous consent of the committee I must interrupt him to tell him his time has expired.

Miss Jewett: I would like to ask the minister who is responsible for the status of women a few questions which I do not believe have been touched on yet today. One of my grave concerns, as the minister knows—and I hope it is one he shares—is the protection of the equal rights of women in the law, as well as before the law, in the government's constitutional proposals. Perhaps I should clarify that by saying that this lack of the protection of the equal rights of women in the constitutional proposals has been brought out very vividly by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and by his own Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Tomorrow morning it will be brought out again. I do not know whether the minister has yet had time to see the brief submitted by the National Association of Women and the Law. It was also one of the main points in the brief given by the commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Was the minister simply relying on what the Minister of Justice and the government's legal experts were saying about section 15 and section 1? Did he at any time this summer when the drafts were proposed take a look, as the minister responsible for the status of women, at the actual wording to see if it would in fact provide women and men equal rights within the law? Did he ask the advisory council for their opinion? As the minister knows they were preparing many papers for a conference which, unfortunately, could not be held in the first week of September, including a brilliant paper