

Oral Questions

Will the minister now use his good offices to ensure that the joint constitutional committee is covered by television so that women, who are most affected and least able to travel to the committee, are able to see and hear those proceedings?

Mr. Axworthy: Madam Speaker, I point out to the hon. member that the entrenchment of non-discriminatory rights in the constitution is one of the most significant and important steps toward the advancement of women's rights in this country.

Miss Jewett: Garbage.

Mr. McGrath: Tell that to Indian women.

Mr. Axworthy: The fact that there will be entrenched non-discriminatory and guaranteed rights for all women across the country will mean that every provincial government and the federal government will be required to eliminate from their statutes all known discriminatory aspects. These provisions will also give women a much better opportunity to go to the courts and test their rights. I do not think women in this country need television in the committee. I think they are fully informed and well aware of what an important step forward that really is.

STEPS TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. As a result of the government's budget, it is estimated that the yearly unemployment average for 1981 will be the highest since the depression years. Given that fact and the fact that increasing numbers of women will be working in order to keep their families above the poverty line, what is the minister doing to increase employment training opportunities for women besides the cosmetic amount he allocated earlier this year?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, as I pointed out in an answer to a previous question, we have taken a very important step forward in the development of affirmative action programs.

An hon. Member: Studies.

Mr. Axworthy: They are designed to eliminate barriers of discrimination in the workplace. Over many generations we have allowed a number of barriers to develop which have prevented women from getting access to normal or non-traditional work. We in the government have taken the step we said in the throne speech we would take to eliminate those barriers, and we took the first important step this summer in introducing it into our own public service.

Beyond that we are offering a number of incentives in our job creation programs and in our training programs and well over 40 per cent of the enrollees in our training programs are women. We have taken a special measure to provide an incentive to private employers by giving them 75 per cent of all training allowances to bring women into non-traditional areas of employment.

I will say finally that we are also awaiting with a great deal of interest the discussions of the parliamentary committee chaired by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce which will give us further recommendations as to steps we can take to improve the employability of women in this country. In the last seven months I think we have taken a number of important steps, and we will see the results of those steps.

Mr. Young: Madam Speaker, I hear the minister talk about steps, but what women in this country want to hear more about is commitment from the minister.

In a recent speech the minister announced that employment growth areas in the future will be in business services, manufacturing and construction, all of which are traditionally male-dominated industries. He also announced that he will encourage skilled workers from other countries to take these jobs. Why does the minister not increase funding for programs which would allow women to take these jobs?

Mr. Axworthy: Madam Speaker, I tried to point out in the previous answer that this government presently spends \$800 million on training programs right across Canada. In addition to that, we have added special programs like the Outreach programs to provide special recruitment and placement services for women, for minorities and for disadvantaged groups. We have offered a special program to provide an incentive for employers to provide on the job industrial training for women in non-traditional work.

If that program is taken up by the private sector and succeeds, we will add to it next year, but we must first see how it works and whether the private sector will co-operate. We must also get the co-operation of the provinces, which have on their books a number of regulations preventing the advancement of women because they do not agree with the affirmative action principles we have established.

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ENERGY

OIL GENERATED ELECTRICITY—PROTECTION OF NORTHERN CONSUMERS FROM PRICE INCREASES

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. My question concerns the Crown Corporation NCPC, which has a virtual monopoly on the generation of electricity in the Yukon and Northwest Territories and which has the already doubtful distinction of charging its customers probably the highest rates in the whole world. How does the minister propose to prevent additional horrendous burdens on northern consumers in areas which are dependent on electricity generated from oil resulting from the extremely high increases in oil prices caused by the Liberal budget?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, I met with Mr. Smith, the chairman of the NCPC, yesterday. One of the areas we covered was this very subject matter of what the