

Unemployment Caused by Female Participation

OTTAWA (CUP) - Canada's high unemployment has been partially caused by too many women looking for jobs, according to Finance Minister Jean Chretien.

Chretien told a Toronto audience recently that the shortage of jobs was partially a result of the unexpectedly high participation of women in the labour force in the last few years. However, he said he expected "this rapid increase to taper off in the future."

However, an executive member of the National Action Committee for the Status of Women says this statement only confirms the government's attitude that women are to blame for unemployment.

Carol Swan said Mar. 7 that the remarks indicate "the feeling of the government as a whole - let's blame the victim for the problem."

"Presently, it's a very fashionable approach to blame women for the un-

employment problem, when it's clearly the economy's inability to respond to the needs of a growing work force that is the culprit."

The opposition has also questioned Chretien's assertion the participation rate will level off, in view of previous vastly incorrect predictions.

Already women's participation rate has reached what the Finance department has predicted for 1986. In a paper presented to the First Minister's conference in

Nov., the department admitted it had underestimated the growth, and, as a result, the labour force would grow faster in the 1980s than previous predictions indicated.

In a recent report, the C.D. Howe Institute also said there were strong reasons to believe women's participation would continue to rise.

In the House of Commons Mar. 5, PC MP David MacDonald questioned Chretien's rationale, given that "previous estimates by his department were so woefully wrong."

Although Chretien responded that the rapid increases in the past few years and the lessening gap in participation rates between the U.S. and Canada indicate "the acceleration will stop very soon", MacDonald pointed out that a recent report by the organization for economic cooperation and development predicted the growth in the participation rate in Europe and the U.S. would continue.

Swan said she expected continued growth, given that women need and wish to work. The finance department mistakes, she said, indicate "they just don't understand the factors that motivate women to work."

The amount of growth, Swan said, would depend on several factors, not the least being what she termed "the success of the government's campaign to pressure women out of the labour force."

Chretien's statement, recent cutbacks in unemployment insurance and a program to help women back into the labour force, and the government refusal to fund job creation programs for women all imply the government's wishes to make women scapegoats for unemployment, she said.

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LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO BE FILET OF SOLE AGAIN.

