

*Adjournment Debate*

Treasury Board, one federal employee out of five is overpaid. Still according to the Secretary of the Treasury Board, the cost of overclassification is estimated to be \$125 million a year, 2.4 per cent of the ordinary rate of pay. The net cost of the employer's classification errors is therefore rather high, and I would point out to the House that the Auditor General said that this amount of money, \$125 million, would be enough for 5,200 jobs, enough to staff three of this Government's average departments.

So, it is rather embarrassing that the government cannot come forward with a solution after promising a review of classification standards. I do not blame the government for previous mistakes, since classification standards were not negotiable in the past. But the Conservatives did promise during the election campaign that for the sake of efficiency those standards should be made negotiable with public servants as it is the case for salaries.

On February 4—as you can see I am not raising that matter for the first time—I asked the Treasury Board what corrective action was considered to alleviate the situation. The Minister reiterated at that time that he would indeed keep his word. And he did confirm it on May 15 in committee while answering a question on job classification in the Public Service. He said that we could rest assured that the government would live up to the commitment made during the election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, considering the report of the Auditor General and media reports as well to the effect that we are facing a serious situation, that some \$125 million and 5,000 jobs are at stake; considering that this government announced in his last budget that it would cut 5,000 jobs next year, I do not think we are seeking too much from the government by asking that it take corrective action in the very near future so as to remove that sword of Damocles hanging over the reputation of public servants, since it is said that they are overclassified; in other words, overpaid. That allegation is groundless. As stated by the President of the Public Alliance as well as the President of the Professional Institute, such allegation does not take into account the fact that a number of jobs are presently underclassified, that is underpaid.

Drastic changes have also occurred in job classifications with the implementation of the computer system into the federal administration. That means that in some cases jobs have not been reviewed for the past ten years and are yet to be classified, and employees should not be blamed for the lack of corrective action by the employer.

I would like to know tonight if the government is prepared to announce that a system of negotiation for classification standards will be implemented so as to correct not only an unfair situation that needs to be corrected but also to strengthen a system that needs to be tough, to implement standards by which the federal administration could operate normally, efficiently and effectively in the best interests of Canadian taxpayers.

● (1815)

[English]

**Mr. Bill Domm (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, Section 7 of the Public Service Staff Relations Act confirms the right of the Treasury Board to classify positions in the Public Service. When the Board's secretariat reviews a classification standard with a view to updating it, a copy of the draft revised standard is provided to the affected Public Service union for comment. That process has enabled meaningful input from unions to be incorporated into the revised standards. As a result of consultation with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, significant changes were made recently in the revised standard for the General Labour and Trades Group.

The Treasury Board Secretariat last fall commenced a review of the program administration classification standard. As an experiment, it was decided to have representatives of the Alliance sit as members of the standards review committee with exactly the same voice in the deliberations as representatives of user government Departments. The arrangement appears to be working well, and the same process is slated to apply to the upcoming review of the administrative services standard.

I mentioned those practices and developments to show that Treasury Board has been and is involving the Public Service unions in a meaningful way in the matter of the review of classification standards.

At the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on May 16, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) advised that all classification standards would be reviewed and updated over the next two years. Any deputy head whose Department's classification performance is unsatisfactory will be called before Treasury Board to explain the situation and submit plans to correct it.

In response to the Hon. Member's question about the election promise of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to make classification a negotiable issue, the President of the Treasury Board referred to the good progress he was making in the discussions he was holding on six union-management issues with the Public Service union leaders.

The views of other interested parties will also be solicited. Out of the process will emerge the Government's proposals to change the Public Service Staff Relations Act. Those changes will be placed before Parliament at the earliest possible date.

[Translation]

SOCIAL SECURITY—BENEFITS PAID TO WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS AGED 60 TO 64 YEARS—EXCLUSION OF SINGLE, DIVORCED AND SEPARATED PERSONS

**Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal-Sainte-Marie):** Mr. Speaker, further to a question I asked the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), whom unfortunately I must call—because of his actions, of the decisions he has made concerning the aged with respect to Bill C-26 and because of