

• (1640)

A person who does quit his or her job for those reasons I outlined—discrimination, mobility, looking after a child, sexual harassment, unsafe conditions in the work place, health reasons—do so with just cause. If you leave your job for any of those reasons and believe you should be getting unemployment insurance, you will. An application for a claim is made to the unemployment insurance office. As I mentioned, you are entitled to have an agent of the same gender to speak to so a woman who has been sexually harassed in the work place will be able to give her story to a female agent.

The claim is made. If there is a dispute with the employer, the benefit of the doubt goes to the claimant. If there is a denial, there is an opportunity to appeal. We are finding that the vast majority of cases can be handled with the agents. A very sensitive approach is taken in our unemployment insurance offices. The public servants administering this unemployment insurance program need to be commended for their outstanding work.

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could tell us what is wrong with the present restrictions imposed by this government back in 1990.

If someone quits or is let go, or quits without just cause—which is not synonymous with just reasons, what is wrong with the present law that says that you lose your unemployment insurance from seven to twelve weeks and your benefit also drops from 60 per cent down to 50 per cent for all of these borderline cases, some of which have been reversed by the Federal Court of Canada? What is wrong with the present restrictions? Why simply remove for all time unemployment insurance benefits for all of these borderline cases that are determined in our courts, a great many of which are under debate today in appeal to the Federal Court or to the Supreme Court of Canada?

Mrs. Browes: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member brings this up. I was looking back at the *Hansard* debates at the time Bill C-21 was being debated, when the issue of just cause was being brought forward.

Supply

I notice that the members of the Liberal Party voted against the just cause issue. They voted against this being included in the bill, which I was really quite surprised about. I notice from *Hansard* that the member who asked the question did not vote that day. Perhaps he did not agree with his party on this issue, but the members of the opposition did not want to include just cause in Bill C-21, which is quite an unbelievable situation.

Mr. Baker: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I am sorry, questions and comments are now terminated. Debate, the hon. member for Timmins—Chapleau.

Mr. Cid Samson (Timmins—Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to enter into this debate to discuss the Liberal opposition day motion. For the record, in the opinion of this House the government's policy of denying unemployment insurance—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. I have just heard a comment from one of the members that the Chair is defending somebody. I am not defending anybody. The time was 10 minutes in questions and comments and she had her 10 minutes.

Mr. Samson: Mr. Speaker, I ask you to note the time on the clock and that my time would start now as opposed to a few minutes ago.

I rise in support of the Liberal opposition motion this evening because I feel that there are some great deficiencies in what the government is proposing to introduce. I would like to state for the House the wording of the motion we are debating.

That, in the opinion of this House, the government's policy of denying unemployment insurance benefits to workers who quit their jobs or who are dismissed is "too severe", "too tough for people", "puts people in a desperate situation", "goes beyond fairness", is "extremist" and "right-wing" and is, therefore, unacceptable to the Canadian people.

It is interesting—more than anything else—to note where these quotations and adjectives came from. They came from the Quebec backbenchers of the Conservative Party. They are the members for Jonquière, Beauce and Abitibi, to name only three. There were others.