

before shipments were suspended did cover ocean freight costs.

We understand the difficulties this situation is causing as noted by the hon. member who just spoke. The government is doing all it can to remedy this situation. It is expected that we will be treated equitably as Russia repays its debts to Canada and other countries so that this great trading relationship and the acceptance of our wheat and so on to them can be continued.

It is ongoing and we thank the member for being concerned and bringing it to the attention of the House.

#### ECONOMIC STATEMENT

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby):** Mr. Speaker, I was very dissatisfied with the response I received from the Minister of Employment and Immigration on the impact his unemployment insurance cuts would have on women who are being sexually harassed in the work place.

He said that the woman should quit her job, expose the harasser and that she would be protected. I have an example of a young woman who did just that and is now in tears embroiled in a legal battle because she did exactly what she was supposed to do according to the minister.

Her employer subjected her to comments about her appearance every day. He would say things such as: "Today you look like a seven" and the next day: "Today you made it to an eight". He made other comments about her which she found to be very uncomfortable and unprofessional. She quit her job and she cited sexual harassment. In her case she won at the Board of Referees. Now the employer is contesting that. He admits to the comments but he says it was all a joke. He has found other employees who will back him up, employees who may themselves fear losing their jobs. He does not want his reputation to be tarnished so he is contesting the UI ruling. She is in tears and must find a lawyer.

The nightmare did not end when she left her job. She does not know whether he will succeed in having her UI ruling overturned and whether she will have to pay back the UI as well as pay the substantial expense of a lawyer's fee.

#### *Adjournment Debate*

The new UI policy is putting sexually harassed women through even more pain. It will revictimize these women by government action.

The Quebec Association of Women who work with their husbands in business is very concerned about the new UI rules. When a woman who works for or with her husband leaves the marriage she often also leaves her job and her livelihood. These 500,000 Canadian women who work with their husbands fought long and hard for the right to UI like any other worker and now this right is *de facto* taken away because marriage breakdown is not considered by this government as a good reason to leave your job. These women will be left without a marriage and without an income. Some may be forced to stay in a terrible situation because of threat of poverty.

The government is promoting UI cuts as a savings for Canadian taxpayers, but what nonsense. UI is an insurance program mainly paid for by the workers themselves and the employers. Cutting people off UI means they are forced to go on welfare which is funded entirely by the Canadian taxpayer. Taxpayers lose when people are cut off UI.

Last year 28,927 UI appeals were heard by referee boards. About 73 per cent of referee board members are men. Most appeals take between one and three months and some are referred to Federal Court. The appellant must fund and pay for a lawyer. The most abused people in the work force may not have the skills or the knowledge to appeal at all.

Women will suffer disproportionately from this new policy. Women make up 53 per cent of the so-called voluntary quits even though they are only 37 per cent of all UI claimants. Forty-three per cent of so-called voluntary quits are in low income occupations compared with 28 per cent of all UI claimants in these occupations.

UI stats show that most voluntary quits do not just work long enough to qualify for UI, then quit. The drop in UI benefits from 60 per cent to 57 per cent disproportionately hurts low income people, most of whom are women.

I said in my question to the minister that he does not understand the realities of the work place for women and visible minorities who are subject to abuse. I stand by that statement. These proposed cuts make a presumption of guilt and force workers to prove their innocence. That is absurd. The evidence is clear. The government must pull back from these regressive cuts to our unemployment insurance program.