

Oral Questions

SYSTEM'S ALLEGED UNFAIRNESS

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Why discriminate against older people? A company shuts down and the next day an older worker goes to the unemployment insurance office. He is not eligible for benefits unless he finds another job. Yet a middle-age worker is entitled to benefits.

Why discriminate and create two classes of citizens? Why discriminate against older workers through this new program?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member says so many things. He ought to be more careful about what he says.

He says that older people who lose their job and cannot find work are not eligible for benefits. This is not true. If they have a pension income of \$5,000 or \$6,000 they are entitled to receive the difference in unemployment insurance benefits. You should also tell that to the people.

INQUIRY WHETHER RETIREE DRAWING \$50,000 FROM REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN WILL RECEIVE FULL UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, why should anyone drawing \$50,000 from an RRSP be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits? Why does the Minister not tell that to the people? He is creating two classes of citizens in Canada, and the older people who are in the galleries now will fight to force the Government to withdraw this measure.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I should simply point out to the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie that we are talking about employment income. RRSP investments are personal investments, much like the various financial instruments a good many Members chose to make investments. RRSP payments cannot be considered as employment income because this is a personal investment, whereas pension funds are an employment income. That is the difference.

[English]

EFFECT ON WOMEN OF COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister responsible for the status of women. It concerns the Forget Report and what the Minister is doing to defend women against the devastating effects that the Forget recommendations, if implemented, would have on women. In particular would the Minister tell us what her response is to the National Action Committee concerns raised regarding annualization which points out that, while most of the part-time workers are women and seemingly would benefit from the Forget recommendations, most of these people do not work the full year and would

be very badly hit by the annualization. Does the Minister agree that women will be especially badly hit by the Forget Commission recommendations? What is she, as Minister, going to do about it?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, last week, we told the Members from Montreal that we are indeed concerned about the particular problems of women. You are now talking about the fact that the majority of part-time jobs are held by women. It is because of this that we said that we did not yet have a position on the recommendations of Mr. Forget and that the Government has not yet said that it intended to apply the annualization principle. We shall be taking all of this into consideration when we give our response around May 15.

[English]

MATERNITY BENEFITS

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): My supplementary question is directed to the Minister responsible for the status of women. It concerns the maternity benefits recommendations of the Forget Commission Report. Would the Minister agree that equality can go too far, namely, for men to receive maternity benefits that would have to be shared; that the desirable response of the Government would be to ensure parental leave for both parents after maternity benefits; that it would be very wrong to deprive women of maternity benefits for, after all, an act which is not yet an equal opportunity employer?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has already responded in a general way on how we view the Forget Report and the issues in it. It is not only up to me to be concerned on behalf of Canadian women, it is the Prime Minister and my Cabinet colleagues who have worked very hard on behalf of women.

Ms. Mitchell: You are an advocate.

Ms. McDougall: We understand the need for women to have good maternity benefits. This is one of the areas that my colleague has already said he will be looking at. It is something that he and I have discussed. It is for the attention not just of the Minister responsible for the status of women, but for all my allies sitting in this Cabinet.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Secretary of State for External Affairs my questions are for the Deputy Prime Minister. The Armenian community has just learned that the Government intends to