

*Government Orders*

It is time this government talked about, acted and proved itself to be fair not only to the people who work for the federal government but also the people who work for Canada in all occupations across this country who are victims of double-digit unemployment.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi):** Mr. Speaker, I know time is passing quickly and I am the fourth speaker this evening. But with the motion presented today, I would not have the right to speak on behalf of the people of Abitibi.

My comment and my question are further to the tabling of Bill C-113. In the news release of February 17, 1993, Mr. Dufour of the Conseil du patronat du Québec said that although he is not fully satisfied with Bill C-113, three points should be considered. The legislation should be reviewed if some of the problems anticipated by business and labour occur. Everything should be done so the details needed to handle cases submitted by workers are reduced to the minimum. The whole administration of the unemployment insurance program should concentrate on finding cheaters and not those who are victims of ups and downs in the labour market.

We know that in Quebec now there are 1,853 cases before the umpires. As of February 8, 2,300 cases had been submitted to boards of referees. We know the umpires go to Abitibi every 18 or 24 months. In the hon. member's riding, how many years does it take for workers to obtain justice in cases heard by the board of referees or umpires?

[*English*]

**Ms. Langan:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague behind me said a heck of a long time. My riding of Mission—Coquitlam is the shake and shingle capital of Canada. It is a softwood lumber community. It is a community that has been totally decimated in terms of that industry as a result of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. It has taken over two years for some people to be able to appear before the board of referees and get results.

I am delighted with the question because it illustrates how hard hit and how badly hurt workers in Canada are going to be as a result of this bill. How will they feed

their families? How will they survive when there is a downturn in the forest industry, where we are facing the softwood tariff in my community and there is huge double-digit unemployment?

The other important point emanating from the hon. member's question concerns the employers' organization in Quebec. I want to ask him where is the comment from the workers' organizations in Quebec? What about the QFL and the CNTU? What are they saying? How long are people suffering? How long are they having to wait? Then if they have to appeal, how long is it going to take to get through that appeal process? It already takes two years and now we are going to have another 250,000 to 500,000 workers appealing in the process. Where will they go? We will have backlogs longer than any refugee backlog in this country. In the meantime, those people will not be able to feed their families.

This government needs to come in with a full employment policy, not an unemployment policy that penalizes people who have worked to make this country work.

**Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls):** Just a short question, Mr. Speaker. I am interested in the point the hon. member made at the beginning of her address. I want her to verify whether or not the interpretation I am taking from this is correct.

She mentioned that the government members were citing 40, 50 or hundreds of legitimate just causes for thousands of cases. If I understand the member correctly, what she has said is that since just cause has been defined under the legislation of the Unemployment Insurance Act, all of the jurisprudence the government members were quoting from and the number of cases goes completely out the window since just cause was defined under the act. That is because prior to that the interpretations were given by the court and the board as to what a reasonable person would have done under similar circumstances. There were numerous cases.

• (1825)

Now all of that goes out the window. As the hon. member is also suggesting, the definition is now so restrictive that perhaps it will be even more difficult to prove just cause than it was in the past. Certainly the government and the Prime Minister have made a terrible error in citing the numbers of cases.