

Government Orders

in fact this includes people who are fired from their jobs, and another \$1.55 billion from the benefit freeze.

The Minister of Finance was quoted in the *Montreal Gazette* on December 5 as being mystified, as being caught completely by surprise by the outrage that greeted the government's decision to cut off unemployment insurance benefits. The minister is still not really sure why so many people are up in arms.

An hon. member: They are not.

Mr. Langdon: The junior minister suggests they are not. I do not know where he spends his weekends.

If he were to talk to ordinary working people in his constituency, he would have found the sense of outrage, anger and real despair about this government that I certainly found in my constituency, and that I found yesterday in a rally against the North American free trade agreement in Cornwall. This anger and concern is out there. If the minister does not believe it he can wait until the election and discover it for himself.

Why is it there? It is there because people across the country understand what is happening in the labour market?

I want to put on the record this morning some cases that I hope will demonstrate to the Minister of Finance exactly why his decision to attack the unemployed in the way he has is so unjust, so cruel and so fundamentally sick. I will give some examples of people who have phoned in to us, of cases we have been working on in our various constituency offices.

There are a couple of cases from Winnipeg. In one case the person quit his employment because the boss was always in a rage, always intimidating, and always insulting. He was given a 12-week disqualification under the present rules until the other employees of this particular company also quit and backed up his story. At that point the 12-week disqualification was finally eliminated.

Under the new changes, he would have been facing having to somehow go out and get welfare. He would not have been able to get that welfare if he had a bank account of any kind, if he had a house or if he had a car. He would not have been able to get welfare.

In another case from Winnipeg someone was being transferred to another community who had a fiancé. Obviously, his fiancé wanted to move too. As a result of the fact that they had not been living together she would

have had to take the 12-week penalty to be able to move from Winnipeg to this other community many miles away.

Under the present changes that are now suggested she would receive absolutely nothing if she wanted to move to the new community and look for a job that would keep her in the same city as the person to whom she is engaged to be married.

That is an actual case.

An hon. member: Are you suggesting that unemployment insurance is for people who quit because they are engaged?

Mr. Langdon: Is the minister suggesting that people should not have some commitments to family life together, that they should not keep the commitment of one person to another? Does this government not understand that people in this country have bonds with each other? Does it not understand these things?

Let us take another case. This is a case in British Columbia. Someone who had worked for two years in a group home for mentally handicapped persons quit and went to a licensing board, to the mental health board for the area, and filed complaints about the conduct of the owner-operator of the home, complaints about mistreatment of residents and misuse of public funds.

A full inquiry was undertaken. While this inquiry was being undertaken the woman involved was requested to keep all information fully confidential. She then applied for UI. She said she had quit her job for just cause but the UIC said it needed a full explanation. She said she could not provide that because of the confidentiality which her complaint involved. She was disqualified for 12 weeks for quitting that job. One year later the investigation of the care home was completed. The home lost its licence. The residents were all shifted to new settings and are doing very well. The woman feels very good about what she did. She is now going back to the UIC to reopen the question of disqualification at that time and she will probably win her appeal. The point is that under these new regulations she would have received absolutely nothing from unemployment insurance for over a year until this case was decided.

Let us take another case from Oshawa. A 22-year old woman worked in a donut shop. She phoned in sick one day. The next day when she went in she was fired. She went to the UIC and said she had been fired. She was told it was just cause because she had phoned in sick.