

Oral Questions

The economic plans of the Liberal leader and the Liberal Party are they want power and there is no economic plan.

This is the same party that gave us the 21 per cent bank rate. This is the same party that gave us the 21.7 per cent mortgage rates.

Canadians want the truth. Canadians want economic policies brought forward, not the shadow boxing the Liberals are trying to give us. Let us hear what the Liberal Party really stands for.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

For weeks now we have heard the government claim that it is very concerned that sexually harassed women should be dealt with fairly and should have access to UI benefits.

Last night in a speech to the Lewisporte Chamber of Commerce in Newfoundland we heard a senior minister of the Crown characterize how he views sexism.

“Apparently just about everybody who quits their job is being sexually harassed. We must have one hell of a lot of attractive people working. I have never been sexually harassed myself. If I were, I would certainly want to make it known that I had been so favoured”.

How can the government on the one hand claim to be serious about the issue of sexual harassment and on the other hand have a senior minister display such abject ignorance on the subject?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the government is very serious about the issue of sexual harassment and violence against women.

The hon. member knows the minister of fisheries, and knowing him as I do, and as she does, I am absolutely convinced that it was not his intention to reflect unfavourably on genuine victims of sexual harassment.

The minister is on his way to Ottawa. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that if there is clarification required about this statement it will be issued.

I have just been handed a document which is a review of a book that was written about Mr. Crosbie. It reads: “In fact it was John Crosbie who pressed his colleagues to appoint more female judges, to federally enforce maintenance and custody orders, to stop discrimination against women in the Armed Forces and put an end to the sexual exploitation of women and children in pornography. But when it comes to a choice between his legislation or his limericks, the press usually runs with his off-coloured humour every time”.

In fairness I do not think—

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister will have a chance to continue.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, it is not the press running with off-coloured humour.

It is the minister once again displaying his absolute and total insensitivity to the issue of sexual harassment and the devastating effect it can have in the work place.

• (1120)

I want to ask the Acting Prime Minister this once again. Given that he and his colleagues claim to be very concerned about this issue, does he not realize that the comments of a senior minister of the Crown ridiculing the issue of sexual harassment in the work place sends out the wrong message at the wrong time and that this is the wrong bill?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I can assure the hon. member and all members of the House that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is not insensitive to sexual harassment and exploitation and violence against women. He has a clear record to substantiate that.

He is in transit. He is coming to Ottawa. If it is necessary to clarify what he has said, I know very well he would want to do that. I am sure the hon. member will find his statement of clarification satisfactory.

[Translation]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, we are being asked to change topics. It is unacceptable for the Acting Prime Minister in the House today not to deny the policies expressed yesterday evening by the minister who belittled the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace.