

*Oral Questions***AGRICULTURE****SOLICITATION OF FARMERS OFFERING GRANT GUARANTEE**

Mr. Jack Scowen (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. Most of the farmers in my constituency, and I understand in other parts of Canada, have received a letter and an application form from an individual in Ontario who guarantees that Canadian farmers will receive an annual grant of between \$8,000 and \$11,000 from the federal Government, if they fill in the application form and forward \$20. How does the Minister advise farmers to respond to this proposition? I have brought it to the attention of the Department.

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Hon. Member's question, and his co-operation in bringing this matter to my attention. I wish to inform the House, and indeed the country, that, thanks to the interest of the Hon. Member and other Members in the House, the officials in my Department are investigating this matter. I would suggest that farmers refrain from filling out the application form and submitting their \$20 until this investigation is completed. Information is available on all government programs from any government Department for no charge, and I invite everybody to apply for such information.

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[Translation]

MANPOWER**GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT POLICY**

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. In the Forget Report, we find the following under recommendation 50:

A significant reduction should be made in the number of staff at national and regional headquarters.

During the first two years in office of the Conservative Government, 1,000 positions have been abolished. Last October 17, the Minister wrote and said that 1,200 jobs would be abolished this coming year. Yesterday, the Department informed the union representatives that, in 1988-89, 800 jobs will be abolished and that, in 1989-90, another 700 jobs will disappear. This makes nearly 4,000 jobs less. Why did the Government anticipate the Forget Report and eliminate these jobs and how will it be possible to maintain the quality of services provided in manpower offices?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, if we began two years ago, we certainly did not anticipate the Forget Report since the Commission was established a year and a half ago. Therefore, we began before the Commission was created.

Second, what the Hon. Member should say, as he is well aware, is that while positions have been abolished, very few people have lost their jobs. There are only a few dozens. I believe that the Government was very clear two years ago when it announced its employment policy. The President of the Treasury Board was very specific. Such policies are applied in the normal way. I repeat that the procedure used by the Department allows us virtually to eliminate the loss of jobs for the designated positions and to respect generally the classification level of the people now occupying those positions.

• (1150)

[English]

QUALITY OF SERVICE

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, Forget Recommendation No. 39 reads:

The Unemployment Insurance Commission should do more to inform the public, employers and employees about the program in general; about the requirements of the law, regulations and appeal process; and about the rights and responsibilities of claimants and appellants.

Line-ups are already long at the unemployment insurance offices. We have 1.2 million unemployed in Canada today. Employment counsellors are already working overtime. I talked to a few this morning. How can the Minister argue that the quality of service will remain the same, better, or improve in the years to come when he is cutting 4,000 jobs, which is one-fifth of all employees working in unemployment insurance?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, the Hon. Member is using a recommendation which applies to a much more general context in the report than the Hon. Member has suggested to state that the quality of services at employment centres is directly related to staff reductions.

I repeat that we are going to assess the recommendations contained in the Forget Report. We are not saying that those recommendations are good or bad, but simply that we want to take the time to evaluate them. It is much too early to establish a relationship between service efficiency and staffing reductions. In my opinion, there is absolutely no direct relation between the fact that a position is abolished and the quality of services provided to Canadians.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE**ASSISTANCE FOR GRAIN PRODUCERS**

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. The tenor of his answers in this House on October 6 and 7, plus his answers today to my