

Oral Questions

Minister not recognize that the Government's action in this case is going to mean that women workers always earn less than men?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, I did not catch the earlier part of the Hon. Member's question—

An Hon. Member: You never do.

Mr. Andre:—because it was not directed at me initially.

In terms of salaries for employees, this is a matter that is being negotiated now between the unions and the Post Office. I do not think it is particularly useful to bring those negotiations or the elements of them to the floor of the House of Commons.

SALARIES OF NEW WOMEN EMPLOYEES

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. It is a matter of government procedure and government policy. Is he going to allow a Crown corporation to insist that all new employees, who will basically be women, receive salaries which are 25 per cent less than those of the men who are working there now?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the Hon. Member would feel he would be contributing to labour peace by bringing in here the question of starting salaries or any other element of the contracts that are now being discussed at the table between management and labour.

As to the assertion of starting employees of one gender or another, that does not mesh with the facts as I know them. As far as I know, there are both men and women working in the Post Office, although I cannot give the Hon. Member the exact percentages at this point in time.

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● (1440)

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REIMBURSEMENT OF EARLY RETIREES—PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. In January, 1986, the Government unfairly and savagely cut the unemployment insurance benefits of thousands of pre-retired Canadians. After a year of protests the Government recognized its error and introduced Bill C-50 on April 1. However, after eight weeks, the Government has not called that Bill for debate.

While we do not accept all parts of the Bill, today we made a proposal to the Government to limit debate on the Bill to two

days, with short committee hearings, so that it would be completely passed by June 19. Won't the Minister give attention to this proposal and accept it immediately so that we can reimburse these thousands of Canadian pensioners?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): We have done much better, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, the House Leader suggested to the Liberal Party having a full day debate on the issue. I am making the same proposal today. We are not suggesting a two-day debate. If you had not blocked so many Bills in the House, this measure would have been passed a long time ago.

[English]

REQUEST FOR TWO-DAY DEBATE

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Government House Leader. Bill C-50 is a complex, controversial Bill which affects thousands of Canadians. The Government is asking us to deal with it in all stages in one day, when it delayed the issue for more than a year.

Two days are reasonable and necessary. Won't the Government House Leader give the Minister permission to accept this reasonable proposal?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if the Liberal Party got its act together. We have the critic negotiating here on this particular issue—

Mr. Allmand: It is the same position.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Clean up your own mess. It is your mess.

Mr. Mazankowski: When they are through, Mr. Speaker, I will give the answer.

We discussed this matter at a House Leaders' meeting yesterday. It is a matter which is still before us for consideration.

There was a proposal made. My understanding is that both House Leaders were to go back to their respective caucuses and/or critics and to come back with another proposal. We are prepared to move on it very quickly.

Mr. Allmand: There it is.

Mr. Mazankowski: The Hon. Member is a well seasoned Member. He knows very well that these kinds of negotiations normally take place at House Leaders' meetings, not on the floor of the House of Commons. What he is really trying to do is bail them out of a sink-hole into which he and his colleagues have got themselves.