

*Government Orders*

• (1640)

As I said earlier, these changes are based on the principle of fairness. I am the first to recognize that this principle takes precedence over budgetary restraints. The Canadian people should not be led to believe that UI benefits will no longer be available if they lose their jobs through no fault of their own. It is absolutely not true and it is very unfortunate that there is so much disinformation on this subject. We are told over and over that with Bill C-113 after April 4, Canadian workers will no longer be entitled to unemployment insurance. That is not true. Nothing will have changed. Canadian workers will continue to be entitled to unemployment insurance, with the exception of those who leave their jobs without just cause.

The choice facing us is clear. We must raise either premiums or taxes. The figures from the department are very clear. A 20-cent increase in premiums means 30,000 more people will be out of work. The alternative is to ensure that ultimately the system will be fairer to the people it was intended for.

Of course we could bury our heads in the sand and pretend that the deficit does not exist, act like the Liberals did and totally ignore this reality. We might even print more money, as suggested by the hon. member for Timmins—Chapleau. Frankly, where does the opposition think that money comes from? The days when we could say that an extra million is no big deal are long gone. But it would seem that the opposition is not aware of that yet.

It is pretty straightforward. Those who quit without just cause, without a good reason, cannot expect to live off the Canadian workers. On the other hand, the unemployment insurance account deficit should not be increased simply because those who voluntarily leave their jobs want to benefit from the safety net put in place for people who lose their jobs for reasons beyond their control.

Last year approximately 225,000 Canadians decided not to work, including 40,000 who were dismissed for misconduct. They have cost the unemployment insurance program nearly \$1 billion.

Now let us take a closer look at who does not fall in that category: workers who quit their jobs because of sexual or other harassment, because of dangerous working conditions, because of the obligation to move to another city where their spouse has found work, because

of the obligation to care for a member of their immediate family, because of another employment, because of discrimination, significant salary reductions, excessive overtime or refusal to pay for overtime work, significant changes in work duties, antagonistic relations with a supervisor for which they are not primarily responsible, because of illegal or unethical practices on the part of their employer, because of discrimination for belonging to a workers' organization, because of undue pressure to take an early retirement to protect the jobs of co-workers when employers decide to make staff reductions or because of such other reasonable circumstances as are prescribed.

All people who leave their jobs for those reasons are eligible for unemployment insurance. Should a worker have to leave his or her job for any of these reasons, he or she would not be affected by the changes to the legislation because it would be just cause and he or she would collect UI benefits.

The proposed changes would not affect employees who leave their jobs with the consent of their employers to save the jobs of their colleagues when staff reductions must be made.

In the end, what are we left with? There is what we call voluntary departures when an employee quits his or her job without justification, when he or she chooses not to work. That person is no longer entitled to unemployment insurance benefits.

• (1645)

Workers dismissed for misconduct will not receive benefits either. Assault and theft are both examples of misconduct. Those are the two groups for which the opposition is prepared to pay benefits. Madam Speaker, think about it: 225,000 applications, \$1 billion, debt for those who will follow us, debt to pay people who abuse the system. Does the opposition have so little respect for my children, their children and those who come after us that they want to indebt them and make them bear the burden of a debt that will have to be paid later so that those who abuse the system can profit from it?

How do we know that unemployment insurance officers will make the right decision? That question is also asked. We know they will because they are guided by over 40 years of precedents with unemployment insurance and over 50 years of experience in administering the unemployment insurance program. I think it should also