

That is called a freeze and the government has imposed a freeze on wages and salaries in the Public Service of Canada, on members of Parliament and indeed on the Prime Minister.

I was accused of nasty things by my colleague opposite. The fact of the matter is it is kind of bizarre when the people receiving payments from the Government of Canada but are not working get an increase and the wages of those working for the Government of Canada are frozen. Now is there or is there not a freeze?

Mr. Harvard: What is the difference in pay?

Mr. McCreath: My hon. friend from Winnipeg—St. James asks as to what is the difference in pay. Well obviously there is a substantial difference in pay. One understands and recognizes that. That is why the ceiling on UI grows on an annual basis.

I think it is important that we try to convey to the public the truth of what is going on and not try to mislead or distort the reality of the situation. When we talk about moving from 60 per cent to 57 per cent it is important at the same time to point out the rise in the ceiling so that people will understand what is actually taking place with respect to this situation.

The issue of fairness comes up and we hear a lot of talk about fairness. Is this fair? The proposed changes I would suggest are fair. They are fair in that they represent but one element of the minister's measures to restrain the deficit and finance new initiatives. They are fair in that they help to free up money for activities such as training and development for unemployed workers. They are fair to employers who will be able to hire new workers thanks to the UI premium holiday for small business. They are fair to premium payers who cannot be expected, particularly in these tough times, to support people who choose not to work. They are fair as well to future UI premium payers who without these changes would have confronted an extra \$1 billion of UI deficit, a deficit which can only be paid up in the final analysis with their premiums. I would suggest that there is quite an element of fairness.

I would like to say a few words on the issue of voluntary quitters about which there has been so much discussion. There have been a lot of misconceptions sent across the land about this issue—is that all the time I have? What a shame, I am doing so well.

Supply

• (1800)

I want to reiterate what many of my colleagues have said. Voluntary quitters who quit with just cause will not be penalized by these proposed measures. Any suggestions to the contrary are mischief making. When my hon. friend from Scarborough West accuses me of hypocrisy I would suggest that one take a look in the mirror. If anybody is suggesting that people who quit with just cause will be imperilled by this legislative proposal they are wrong. The reasons are spelt out in the act. The Liberal Party voted against them. There have been a multitude of decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada and the Federal Court listing reasons. There are 50 pages of valid reasons, of just cause spelt out and binding.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): We now move to questions and comments for 10 minutes. First I will recognize the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie and then the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I want to raise three points briefly so that my colleague can make more elaborate comments on Bill C-105.

First, it seems that work relations are somewhat ignored in this legislation, and this is evidenced in a letter sent by the bar to the Minister of Finance which says: "The outright denial of the right to benefits in all cases where workers voluntarily quit their job without just cause in the legal sense or in cases of misconduct would show a lack of realism regarding the conflictual situations that occur in the context of work relations." This is what the Quebec bar had to say.

Second, I want to submit the case of a CIP worker in Trois-Rivières, for example, who, after working and contributing to the UI program for 25 years, loses his job because the plant closes down. This worker does not want to be unemployed, he knows he must find a job. He does find a job by chance—I mean by chance—and works for three or four days before quitting because the work conditions are really not suitable for him. He then goes to the unemployment insurance office where he is told: "You quit your job, therefore you are not entitled to benefits." Do you not think that because of situations like this people will say: "I am not taking any chances; I would rather be getting UI benefits than make an effort to find a job and risk losing it all"?