

Oral Questions

BOSNIA

have been able to receive an additional \$1,000 per year as a result of the changes we implemented.

I have read the comments of the people of the St. Simeon area and their concern about the design of the UI zone, but that is a very different issue. That goes back to the UI reforms which were brought in by the Conservative government when the hon. member's hon. leader was a member of that government.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, here is my supplementary question. The time for speeches has passed: it is now time to act.

Does the minister realize that, while he doles millions of dollars out to the Winnipeg Jets, the unemployment insurance cuts made by this government and the one before it, in particular those contained in this government's last two budgets, are making life miserable for the unemployed and unbearable for seasonal workers?

The Speaker: Please ask your question.

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Speaker, I will start over again.

Does the minister realize that the unemployment insurance cuts—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: My dear colleague, I could not hear you. Please ask your question.

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Speaker, here is my question.

Does the minister realize that, while he doles millions of dollars out to the Winnipeg Jets, the unemployment insurance cuts contained in this government's last two budgets are making life unbearable for seasonal workers and are causing people from Charlevoix to starve?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member could serve his constituents in that area most effectively if he were able to use his powers of persuasion with his colleagues to join with us as we attempt to provide a major modernization of the unemployment insurance system. It will provide the kinds of tools and resources that will enable people to get back to work.

The problem is the Bloc Quebecois has opposed every effort to provide for an improved unemployment insurance system, every effort to give people more resources to get back to work. I would appeal to the hon. member to use his good offices to try to change his party's policies and co-operate with us in trying to provide a much more effective unemployment insurance system for Canadians.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it seems the government will leave our Canadian forces in the former Yugoslavia.

Our mandate in Bosnia is to assist in the delivery of goods, but the Sarajevo airport is and has often been closed and when convoys do move they are often prevented from reaching their destinations. Last night the defence minister suggested that to reduce our vulnerability we will pull in our observers and concentrate our forces for protection.

• (1440)

Will the minister explain how we are to carry out our mandate when supplies are not getting through and our troops are all hunkered down in bunkered compounds?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. critic for the Reform Party is taking considerable licence with what I said last night.

When we talk about perhaps bringing the UNMOs out of exposed situations, that to me is good common sense. When we talk about concentration of troops as the Prime Minister has explained, this does not necessarily apply to Canada because our troops are reasonably well concentrated at our two posts at Kiseljak and Visoko. But it does make good sense for the UN to continue the mandate to have some concentration of its forces so there is less exposure.

I would like to take exception to what the hon. member has been saying in terms of the discharging of the mandate in Bosnia. The fact is that for most of the last three years those flights have operated with Canadian Hercules from Ancona to Sarajevo. That has been a lifeline which has kept those people fed. The other convoys have been getting through. Of course in the last couple of weeks things have been difficult, but the last couple of weeks does not tell the tale.

I continue to be completely surprised as to how members of his party stand in the House and offer a plan to retreat when they should be offering the Canadian people a plan to retrieve our peacekeepers.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party is suggesting a withdrawal.

Will the government acknowledge that withdrawal at this time does not mean abandonment of the region but rather opens the door to other options which are currently unavailable because of the threat of hostages? For instance, has the government considered replacing withdrawn ground forces with an air squadron, thus continuing Canadian presence and providing a needed capability?