

[Translation]

Mr. Harvey (Chicoutimi): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Chicoutimi on a point of order.

Mr. Harvey (Chicoutimi): I am sorry, but I think that we are operating under a highly advanced system of ministerial responsibility and, to be as popular as the hon. member, all we would have to do would be to increase government spending by 15 per cent year after year, and the debt would rise to \$850 billion in no time—

Mr. Prud'homme: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Saint-Denis on a point of order.

Mr. Prud'homme: I simply want to submit to the Chair that a point of order should indeed be one. The arguments being put forward may be interesting and make for a fascinating speech, yet they do not constitute a point of order. It is the continuation of a speech. I would ask that my colleague be allowed to continue—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I thank the hon. member for Saint-Denis, but the Chair had already realized that it was a matter of opinion. I shall give the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce one more minute.

[English]

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the statements made by the hon. member are totally false.

As a result of Bill C-21 in 1990, unemployment insurance coverage for Canadian workers was reduced from 70 per cent to 58 per cent. What happened to those workers who were not covered? They had to get welfare from the municipalities and the provinces of Canada. Welfare bills went up, and that is a fact. Ask any province. The government cut transfer payments for education, it cut transfer payments for health care and it cut transfer payments for social services. It is a farce. Nobody believes it anymore.

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to enter this debate.

Supply

I would like to start by reading the opposition motion which I think is very significant and should not be taken very lightly. The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government's policy of denying unemployment insurance benefits to workers who quit their jobs or who are dismissed is "too severe", "too tough for people", "puts people in a desperate situation", "goes beyond fairness", is "extremist" and "right-wing"—

Those are very damning statements to make about any particular government. I want to put this debate into context for a moment. It seems the debate we are having today is one dealing with quitters. Because we are entering into that debate it is necessary for us first to put into perspective how many people we are really talking about.

• (1830)

In 1992 the total of claims delayed or denied was 132,800. Out of that total 2,740 people were fired for misconduct and 16,710 quit their jobs. For the sake of this whole debate we are talking about 20,000 people.

One of the interesting parts of this whole debate is that out of the 20,000 people we are talking about 50 per cent of them quit their jobs because they were on their way to another job. As the mathematician that you are, it means that 10,000 people are removed from this debate. Of the remaining 10,000 people 43 per cent found a new job within 10 weeks. Therefore the whole amount we are debating today is 6 per cent to 7 per cent, in essence roughly 2,000 people.

If we are talking about 2,000 people in the whole system who are legitimately going to have to go through the process of dealing with just cause, we should put it into perspective. The reasons for these people quitting their jobs should be looked at. There are some very good reasons.

Let me give a good reason. The minister opposite who spoke not too long ago said simply that we were prepared to look at sexual harassment and the proof of sexual harassment. I checked this afternoon and last year in the city of Thunder Bay alone 10 cases of sexual harassment were reported to the UIC office. The fact remains that if a small town like Thunder Bay had 10 reported cases, one can suggest that across the board the number must be a lot higher. If we are only talking about 2,000 people in this whole process then I must question just what it is that the government has in mind.