

Oral Questions

I ask the government side of the House and the Deputy Prime Minister: Will this minister be reprimanded? Will he be removed from his position of trust and authority so that Canadian women will understand that this House of Commons and this government do not tolerate such specious remarks about Canadian women?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I have already indicated that the hon. minister of fisheries would be issuing a statement of clarification so that there is absolutely no misunderstanding.

In talking about his record in the book that was written about him—

Mr. Kilgour: You have already read it.

Mr. Mazankowski: I am just reading a review, something that has been handed to me, for the turncoat across the way.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Has anybody ever read any of your books, David? Anyone? Name one.

Mr. Mazankowski: The review states as follows: "In fact it was John Crosbie who pressed his colleagues to appoint more female judges, to federally enforce maintenance and custody orders, to stop discriminating against women in the Armed Forces and put an end to sexual exploitation of women and children in pornography".

That is a pretty good record.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The minister does not really understand the problem in totally denying unemployment insurance benefits to those who leave their jobs voluntarily.

Yes, those who have just cause will get unemployment insurance, but there are many cases where just cause is not clear-cut and it is difficult, costly and takes months to prove. In the meanwhile the employee is presumed guilty and has no income.

How can the minister support such an excessive, harsh penalty in these questionable circumstances? Wasn't the

penalty of 12 months that he introduced two years ago tough enough?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, surely the hon. member is referring to the penalty of 12 weeks.

The government has been clear. This is not about trying to go after the unemployed. This is about trying to protect the integrity of the UI system. This is about trying to avoid having to raise the premium rates to such a level that it would kill the creation of jobs in Canada.

This is about trying to ask people who have jobs, who luckily have jobs today with this high rate of unemployment, to please stick to their jobs and not expect to quit them without valid reasons and expect their fellow Canadians to pay them benefits for a period of time.

If we had all the money in the world, if we were irresponsible as the Liberal Party was for 16 years, maybe we could ignore the fact that at the end of the day it is always Canadian workers who foot the bill. We care for them and that is why we took these measures.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Madam Speaker, the minister is still not answering the key question and he is giving us a lot of rhetoric.

Proving just cause is extremely difficult in many cases. Appeals on average take three to four months and in Montreal they have taken up to two years with no income during that period. As I said the employee is presumed guilty until he proves his case.

When just cause is not always clear-cut and it is difficult to prove, how can the minister justify such an excessive, absolute penalty? Why does he not drop this ridiculous unnecessary bill?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, again I know the hon. member is a reasonable person. Why portray the UI situation for those who appeal as being all in one category when he knows that the vast majority of cases are dealt with expeditiously and within a reasonable time?

I am not saying that this is a perfect world and that we are not ready to try to improve the speed with which we deal with these cases. We are looking at better ways of delivering services to the Canadian taxpayers. The UI