

Oral Questions

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REQUEST THAT MINISTER WITHDRAW BILL C-50

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Last Thursday, I had the pleasure of meeting hundreds of early retirees from the Trois-Rivières area who object to Bill C-50, which will cut unemployment insurance benefits for older workers. Tomorrow, I will be in the beautiful riding of Lac-Saint-Jean, and I will meet the same people, hundreds of them, who feel it is totally unacceptable that this Bill should deprive them of their benefits. Could the Minister inform the House, considering the flexibility she has shown as the new Minister responsible for Immigration, whether she intends to withdraw Bill C-50 in order to eliminate this discrimination against older workers who, even if they lose their jobs and look for other work, are not entitled to full unemployment insurance benefits because they are drawing on their pension fund? Would she be prepared to amend the Bill to eliminate this discrimination?

● (1450)

[English]

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I have no plans to amend this legislation at this time. We are watching the situation very carefully.

As the Hon. Member knows, reasonable settlements were made with a great many of the people involved, so that we are really talking about a very few. We will continue to ensure that the legislation is fair for everyone.

[Translation]

DEMAND FOR EXPLANATIONS

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I wish the Minister would do her homework, because there are still 40,000 cases, and tomorrow I will meet older workers in the area of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, and Mr. Clean, Mr. Bouchard is in trouble because of this Bill. How will the Minister explain to Canadians and to older workers that her Government wastes \$30 million to sell its free trade propaganda, wastes huge sums of money on frigates, while workers who need help are denied benefits to which they are entitled and which they paid for out of their salaries? How will the Minister explain to these people that she cannot withdraw this Bill to give them a fair deal?

[English]

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member knows that some \$137 million was paid as a result of the passage of Bill C-50. He also knows that the unemployment insurance account cannot be used as a form of supplementary income. Those funds belong to the people who paid into it from all across

Canada. We take their payments into this as essentially being their own money and we do not use it as a form of supplementary benefit.

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FUR TRAPPING INDUSTRY

ATTITUDES OF OTHER COUNTRIES—FORTHCOMING ECONOMIC SUMMIT IN TORONTO

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. It concerns the fur issue.

Historically the indigenous people of Canada have relied very heavily on the fur industry. Within the next couple of weeks we will be host to an economic summit, with some 5,000 media world-wide in attendance.

Can the Minister seize the opportunity as a means of conveying to the world, including leading nations of the world, our concerns about policy and attitudes that have been expressed by some countries with regard to the fur trade?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, my colleague puts forward a very interesting suggestion and one I would like to explore with him and other Members of the House. I am aware of the excellent report of a standing committee of the House chaired by the Member for Wetaskiwin, co-chaired by the Member for Timiskaming, and on which the Hon. Member also served.

I believe there is an opportunity to explain to the media of the world, indeed to Europe, how opportunities will be denied, how pride will be denied, how a standard of living and indeed a tradition and culture of the indigenous people of Canada will be denied if this continues.

Another important concern is the fur industry which is very important right across the nation. I appreciate the Hon. Member's suggestion and would like to explore it.

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ENERGY

BRITISH COLUMBIA HYDRO—EFFECT OF THERMAL PLANT ON AIR QUALITY

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, the federal Government is about to give permission to British Columbia Hydro to fire up its Burrard thermal plant in Port Moody, British Columbia. This is not for emergency power or load balancing, but for export of power to the United States.

Is the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources aware that the air quality and ozone layer in the Fraser Valley in British