

Oral Questions

Mr. Bouchard: Ha! Ha! Mr. Speaker, we announced last Friday an allocation of \$230 million for people who re-establish their eligibility for unemployment insurance with a second job.

We also clarified certain points regarding those who were apparently misinformed about the consequences of applying the rules retroactively to January 1, 1986.

I think that we have acted honestly to correct actual situations, and as for the principles, the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie said that we have rejected the principles involved. We certainly did not; what we have done was to consider certain variables in the practical application of these principles.

Now I think that the situation has gone back to normal and that the Government will continue to examine specific cases—

Some Hon. Members: Order, order!

[English]

MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians examine this policy they will find that the Minister has not solved the problem for thousands and thousands of Canadians who are bilked out of their unemployment insurance payments. How can the Minister justify income testing unemployment insurance with pensions when he does not do it with profits, rents, interest, and dividends? If it is not done for those things, why do it for pensions? How does he explain that?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce is getting into the details of how the Unemployment Insurance regulations are applied.

What the Government has said, what the Minister of Finance said in 1984 and what I am still saying today is that we consider that anyone who applies for Unemployment Insurance must do so because he is temporarily without employment and not to gain a second source of income. This is the principle which applies now and it will continue to apply.

● (1440)

[English]

TREATMENT OF EARLY RETIREES

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. In light of the fact that last Friday the Prime Minister said: "There shall be no second-class citizens in this country as long as this Government remains in office, postal services or otherwise", and in light of the Minister's announcement last Friday with respect to his half-backtracking on pension as earned income for unemployment insurance purposes, making a clear distinction between pensioners who live in Toronto who can get a second job, and pensioners who live in eastern Canada who cannot, will the Minister tell the House why he is creating this second-class citizenry?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, Friday's announcement did not create second-class citizens, because those people who retired in Toronto and those who retired in St. John's will both have access to a second job, thereby taking up a second career, and will then become eligible to unemployment insurance.

The same principle applies across the land. There is no question in our view of this applying differently depending on where one lives in Canada.

[English]

REQUEST THAT BENEFITS BE PAID TO ALL RETIREES

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows full well it is much easier to get that second job if one lives in southern Ontario than if one lives in the other regions of Canada. Therefore, the person in Toronto will be able to requalify, according to the Minister's statement. Will the Minister now give a commitment? Don't go half way, go all the way and give all the retirees their U.I. benefits to which they are entitled.

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the commitment I am willing to make is the same one that I and the Government have always made: it is to make sure that people in Canada who are temporarily unemployed and are on the labour market have access to unemployment insurance. That commitment the Government is ready to make at any time, anywhere.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

LOW SULPHUR WESTERN COAL—PROMOTION OF USE IN ONTARIO

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Lethbridge—Foothills): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. In Ottawa today we have a delegation of United Mine workers and elected officials from British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan promoting the increased use of low sulphur western coal in Ontario. What is the federal Government doing to promote low sulphur western coal in Ontario as a solution to the acid rain problem in central and eastern Canada, as well as promoting Canadian jobs and economic development?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member knows, the report on the use of western coal in Ontario was made public on August 20, I believe. Clearly the Government supports the initiatives contained within that report. To that end, officials have been meeting with representatives and discussions have taken place with representatives of Ontario Hydro. I will be meeting with the mine workers, and I hope to meet later on this month with Premier Peterson.