

Adjournment Debate

somewhat skeptical when the Minister said in the House that all but 130-odd employees out of about 3,000 had been recycled within the Public Service. I believe the Minister realized that he had made a mistake, because he rose on a point of order in the House three days later, specifically on October 11, and indicated he wanted to correct some misinformation he had provided to the House on October 8 in reply to a question from the Hon. Member from Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), and I quote:

Last November a decision was made to reduce the growth planned by the previous Government for 1985-86 by some 1,300 person years. Because of vacancies and attrition, only 725 indeterminate employees were directly affected. Almost 700 of them were redeployed within the Public Service. Approximately 30 were actually laid off and all of them were entitled to a priority for placement for one year.

On a Point of Order which was not really one, the Minister corrected a statement which he had made in the House on October 8.

● (1805)

[English]

Because the Minister answered in that way on October 8 last I made inquiries of the Public Service Commission in respect of these employees who were declared surplus. I requested the statistics in connection with this matter, and I was provided with a document dated October 10, 1985 from the Staffing Priorities and Complaints Centre.

This document states that 1,972 employees were declared surplus during the period September 1, 1984 to September 30, 1985. Of that number, 766 were removed from the system for a number of reasons, including priority status of one year expired, resignations, retirement, death, status rescinded or reappointments.

Of those who are still on the priority list, 296 were laid off and 910 were considered surplus, bringing us to the 1,206 employees who still are on the priority list and who have to find jobs. Of those, 253 have chosen not to exercise their priority entitlement. This is in the document dated October 10, 1985. The total number of reappointments being 673, that means that only 34 per cent of the employees who were either laid off or declared surplus were redeployed.

Those are the actual figures to September 30, 1985. They do not include the 1,500 employees of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development or the 300 maintenance workers under the Department of Public Works—and these are mainly women—who have been told that they will get their pink slips on April 1, 1986. Nor does it include the numerous public servants who have been laid off or declared surplus since October 1, 1985.

When the Minister said in the House on October 11, 1985 that he had been provided with the figures and wanted to set the record straight, I believe he did not have the record straight. I believe his Parliamentary Secretary should now set the record straight once and for all. Give us the complete facts with reference to this lay-off program of the Government.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague is concerned for his constituents, the public servants, and I know, too, that he does not want to indulge in any scare tactics. He has applauded our efforts in handling this matter in the most professional, responsible and fair method possible. I want to thank my hon. friend for putting the facts in connection with this program on the record.

There are some 1,972 employees affected. However, we have done our best to redeploy as many of these people as possible. I only received the figures as he read them out. It seems to me that we still have a lot of time to realize positive results on the efforts we are making.

When we announced in the May 23 Budget that we were going to reduce Treasury Board controlled person-years, we put the emphasis on the word "attrition". We said in the Budget papers that efforts will be made to achieve these reductions through attrition wherever possible. We have a reasonable record in redeploying these people through attrition. The Hon. Member indicated that some 1,000 people had retired. That was the whole idea of the attrition policy. We realize that people retire, decide for one reason or other that they want to go on to other things, or die unexpectedly. That is why we have been focusing on attrition and redeployment as a fair and responsible way to handle what everyone knows is a problem for the Government, the deficit.

● (1810)

The Hon. Member will know that prior to declaring any employee surplus all Departments are expected to redeploy as many as possible of the affected employees within the Department including retraining where this is necessary. When a surplus is declared, employees are usually given six-months' notice. I would point out that the official minimum notice period is four months but the Government has decided to give six months' notice to people who are being laid off. On being declared surplus, these employees are immediately entitled to a priority for placement in vacant positions in the Public Service for which they are qualified or could become qualified through retraining. If surplus employees accept a lower paying job, their salaries are protected for a year.

We appreciate that this is a delicate matter but there does not appear to be long lines of people pounding at our doors saying that they have been mistreated. I think that in itself speaks to the treatment they have received. If my hon. colleague can show any instances of us not being fair, I request that he bring them to my personal attention.

SOCIAL SECURITY—REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF CHILD TAX CREDIT

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, on October 16 I raised a very important question regarding family allowances and the child tax credit. The Government has been feeding us the line that its increase in the child tax credit will make up for the unfortunate decrease in the family allowances.