

*Oral Questions***ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY**

MOVEMENT OF GRAIN THROUGH THUNDER BAY

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. As the Minister will know, there are over 800 workers in Thunder Bay who are involved in the grain industry lay-off, another 500 elsewhere in the Seaway system, and the suggestion by the lake carriers that up to one-third of the fleet will be tied up for more than a year. I want to ask the Minister of Transport what steps his Government will take to ensure that Thunder Bay gets its fair share of the movement of grain.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his question. I believe that everyone will admit that the drought that we have in western Canada is something which is extremely unfortunate.

At the present time the Canadian Wheat Board has not yet decided the levels of grain that will be transported. I believe that we are very sensitive to the issue that my friend has raised in terms of Thunder Bay. We are monitoring the situation very closely. We hope to be able, with the collaboration of the Canadian Wheat Board, to consider what the Hon. Member called a fair share of the transportation of grain.

LAID-OFF WORKERS ELIGIBILITY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is to the Acting Minister for Employment and Immigration, whoever may be responding for the Minister today.

Thunder Bay is in a situation in which, because of the variable entrance requirements, 17 work weeks are required to be eligible for unemployment insurance. In addition, these individuals who are losing their jobs because of the drought situation should be treated in the same way that the prairie producers are being treated.

Is the Government prepared to waive the normal requirements of variable entrance so that those workers who only have 10 or 12 work weeks will now be eligible for unemployment insurance?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration)): Mr. Speaker, I think that I can remind this House that unemployment insurance is to compensate workers who have lost their jobs; it is not a supplementary income program. We asked for a report on the situation that now exists in Thunder Bay. Our Department is studying it and I am convinced that with the Jobs Strategy and the number of programs we have in place, we can provide these workers with alternate income to help them through this difficult period of unemployment.

[English]

ABORTION

SUPREME COURT CASE—REQUEST THAT HEARING NOT BE POSTPONED

Mr. John Reimer (Kitchener): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. I was shocked and angered to learn through the media that the Minister was intervening to defer indefinitely the Borowski case scheduled to be heard by the Supreme Court in October.

Surely in light of the Morgentaler decision that left the rights of the unborn in a vacuum, and given the Minister's own words to the press that he does not want to go through trials and appeals wondering if the new abortion law Parliament might pass would be constitutional, why doesn't the Minister stop allowing his Department's bias to prejudge the case, withdraw his intervention, and allow the case to be heard?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I should correct the Hon. Member. There is no bias within the Department of Justice. I take full responsibility for any advice that I give to the Government. Indeed, in this particular case I am sure the Hon. Member, on reflection, will agree with me that we would want to have the case brought forward by Mr. Borowski considered in a legislative context.

The court has generally not wanted to talk in abstract terms but, rather, to have legislation or the opinion of Parliament with respect to a particular issue upon which to base its decision. Rather than being negative, I think I have taken an action which is supportive of having the Borowski case heard at an appropriate time in the future when Parliament has spoken on this very important and sensitive issue.

Mr. Belsher: Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

ABORTION DEBATE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Ross Belsher (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, in today's article in which that news was reported there is also a quotation attributed to the Minister that the Government has a preferred option in the abortion debate. Will the Minister clarify if that is fact, or whether or not he is being quoted out of context?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I was questioned fairly extensively in the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General. If the Hon. Member were to ask his colleagues, the Hon. Member for London East and the Hon. Member for Kitchener, who were there, with respect to this particular issue he will find out what I actually did say and be able to draw his own conclusions.

TIMING OF COURT HEARING—MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the same Minister. I want to challenge his