

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

ALLEGATION UNITED STATES WORKERS DRAWING BENEFITS FROM CANADA WITHOUT BEING CHECKED—REQUEST FOR REPORT

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Manpower I should like to direct my question to his parliamentary secretary. It relates to reports to the effect that some 2,000 American construction workers were involved with employment in and around the Sarnia area and after their employment terminated returned to the United States. Apparently unemployment insurance cheques are still being forwarded to them without inspectors having any way to check whether or not they have found jobs or are in receipt of the United States unemployment insurance. Is the parliamentary secretary aware of this very serious matter, and will he undertake to bring it to the attention of the minister in order that he can look into it and report back to the House as soon as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. Arthur Portelance (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Unemployment Insurance Act section 12, a reciprocal agreement was signed by Canada and the United States. Under this agreement, anybody having contributed to unemployment insurance may apply for benefits in the state where he worked, or in Canada if he ever worked here. Therefore an American having worked for more than eight weeks in Canada and returning to the United States when he is unemployed may apply and prove his entitlement to the benefits in Canada. However, the applicant must meet all conditions of eligibility as provided in the act and regulations.

● (1150)

[English]

Mr. Alexander: We are aware of that particular section. There is another section in the act which indicates that in the event of any duplication of unemployment insurance payments the Governor-in-Council, by way of regulation, can accept that particular employment. So my question still is whether the parliamentary secretary will bring this problem to the attention of the minister in order to see whether or not there is any duplication in payments, and if so, then they are wrong and the parliamentary secretary can recommend the implementation of the regulation just referred to by me.

[Translation]

Mr. Portelance: Mr. Speaker, the commission is aware of the hon. member's allegations and we shall bring them to the attention of the minister. An answer can be expected within a few days.

Oral Questions

[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE THAT NO POLITICAL CONSIDERATION WILL ENTER INTO LAYING OF CHARGES

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to that asked by the hon. member for New Westminster and it is addressed to the Minister of the Environment. In view of the statement made by the Canadian Wildlife Service Division at the Berger inquiry where it was admitted the agency took political implications into consideration before taking legal action and that the legal action which was taken was only of a token nature, can the minister assure the House that in future charges will be laid without fear or favour?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of the Environment): I do not accept the statement that this was done in the past because of favour or political interference. It has never been that way.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): That is what the man said.

Mr. Brisco: Is the minister then saying that this is not the policy of his department or that it is not the policy of Mr. Stephens and that Mr. Stephens was in fact making a very grave error in his testimony before the commission?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): The only thing I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that this is not the policy of the department.

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[Translation]

INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Mr. Marcel Prudhomme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the right hon. Prime Minister a question.

The Leader of the Opposition announced this morning the formation of a shadow cabinet. Would the Prime Minister do the Leader of the Opposition a favour by suggesting the creation of a physical fitness and amateur sports department to give the hon. member for Joliette the opportunity of serving as a full-time cabinet member?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of suggestion that I want to make sure will be considered in depth. I have the impression, on looking at seats today, that the shadow cabinet would be more appropriately termed a "ghost" cabinet.

[English]

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is very cheap.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hope it will not go unnoticed, even by the Prime Minister of the country, that the Leader of the Opposition and other members of our party are attending the funeral of the Hon. Grattan O'Leary who gave service to this country at least equal, if not surpassing, that of the Prime Minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!