

Government Orders

38 per cent increase over the applicants the year before, so clearly this is a desirable place to work.

We cannot hire all of them. Only 11,000 appointments were made to the Public Service and that means about one in every 100 applicants was successful. It is pretty clear, as I said before, that federal government jobs are good jobs in spite of wage restraints and that they are attractive jobs and still in high demand.

The government's approach to wage restraint has been forged as I said before out of economic necessity to protect the interests of the taxpayers and it is balanced by a desire to continue collective bargaining with our unions on other issues. There are not all monetary issues. There are other non-monetary benefits and operational issues that will benefit public employees.

The government has a fight, but the fight is not with employees of the government. The fight is against recession and against inflation and we must all share the burden for economic recovery. We are asking public employees to tighten their belts with the rest of us, with all Canadians, and help us get over this particular tough time we are facing. We are simply asking that they help do their share in keeping the inflation to a minimum and we are asking that they work with the rest of Canadians who have been having a difficult time this past year to find a way, a road map, to economic recovery.

It is not easy sometimes to not accept what one has grown used to accepting, but I do not believe there was any guarantee ever written into any law of this country that says that all Canadians have a right to receive an automatic increase in spite of what is going on with the rest of the sectors.

I am confident that public employees will want to help us get through this recession, go back to work when the legislation is passed, and build a better Canada and fight toward economic recovery.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg South is a good member of Parliament and I have known her for her seriousness and her kindness. I know she has a heart. My question will deal with the question that begs to be answered.

I have heard several speeches today by members of the government saying that other provincial jurisdictions

have imposed a freeze on public service salaries. I want to remind the House that the facts of the matter are that New Brunswick imposed a freeze and I want to read what that freeze also had. I quote from the June 7, 1991, of *The Telegraph-Journal*: "Wage Freeze becomes Law":

The government will go ahead with its own plan for aiding low-income workers, Clavette said.

The Minister of Finance.

Under the plan full-time employees receiving less than \$17,500 a year will get a \$600 bonus next year, while those earning \$17,500 to \$20,000 annually will receive \$500.

My question is to the member from Winnipeg South, given that Bill C-29 treats everybody the same way, given that I know that she is sensitive to those who, as workers in the Public Service of Canada, are low paid. She knows, like I do, that most of them are women. In my own riding, 20 per cent of the families are single parent families, women mostly with children, earning less than \$25,000. Today I have had calls from people earning less than \$20,000.

Does she not believe that it would be the decent thing to do to have a kind of arrangement, a kind of an offer, a return to negotiations, a kind of opening to understanding that some public servants need to be looked after, that they are not all fat cats? Certainly she would approve of negotiations to give those people something more than zero next year with the taxes they have to pay like everybody else, with the increased inflation that we have to cope with and with all the problems that she knows exist in this country at this time.

Mrs. Dobbie: Madam Speaker, my hon. friend is correct. I would never want to characterize public servants or all public servants as fat cats. Those were never my words and I have never used them.

He used the profile of some of the members of his constituency making less than the average public servant would make as certainly not being fat cats whether they work for the Public Service. I would like to remind the hon. member that many people in the private sector make considerably less overall, based on categories, than people in the public sector.

Generally, if one looks at a clerk working for the government and a clerk working for the private sector, the disparity between the two wages is quite wide. I would remind him that those people pay taxes and their interests are also being protected here.