

Government Orders

Eleven, do taxpayers think that the unemployment insurance program should be administered by the workers and the employers who pay the premiums? Further, let us ask if workers had a choice would they ask the government to administer the UI program for them? Would they hand over the reins? I think not.

Twelve, do taxpayers, workers and employers think that the unemployment insurance program should be completely voluntary, or should it be compulsory as it is now? That would be a very interesting question to ask.

Thirteen, would workers rather have a choice about where they invest their UI premiums? Would workers get a better return on their investment than the UI program offers them?

Reformers asked the government how many jobs would be created if workers were investing their UI premiums for themselves rather than sending the \$8.3 billion to the government to redistribute. If they had that money to invest I wonder if there would not be more jobs created in this country than at present.

Fourteen, would unions not be able to provide unemployment insurance for their members if the workers they represent chose to contribute their premiums to the union rather than send them to the government? Would that not be a very interesting question to put to the workers and see what their answer would be?

Fifteen, would employers like to have the choice about where they would invest the \$11.7 billion in UI premiums? Would they like to have some choice as to where to put that money?

Employers pay more UI premiums than their workers. This is a cost of labour for the employer and is really money coming out of the pockets of the workers. How many jobs would be created if employers were allowed to invest that \$11.7 billion that is spent on UI premiums if they could invest them back in their company? What if they could put that money into training programs, into research, into development, into export and market development, capital improvements and expansion? The changes would be phenomenal if they had a choice as to what to do with that money.

On February 23 the Minister of Human Resources Development said in this House that reducing UI premiums will create 40,000 new jobs in this country. The Canadian Labour Congress in a brief to the standing committee on human resources development stated if seven cents off UI premiums resulted in 40,000 jobs created then reducing premiums \$2.80 would create 1.6 million jobs, and we would have arrived at full employment.

•(1610)

That is what I call a real job creation program. What would employment be in this country? It would be zero if we created 1.6 million jobs. To be fair, the CLC is sceptical that if we reduced premiums that far it would create that many jobs. Reformers are not that sceptical.

Reformers believe that \$1 left in the hands of workers or employers for them to invest is worth \$5 in the hands of government, a ratio of one to five. Reformers have a much different vision about income security and income insurance programs. Reformers believe in asking Canadians what they think. Reformers believe in giving Canadians a choice. Reformers believe that changes as big as the ones proposed by the Minister of Human Resources Development should be ratified by the people in a binding national referendum.

These are huge decisions that we are making. That department alone administers \$69 billion. The people know better than the government what needs to be done, and we ought to give them that choice.

For years now the polls show us that in many cases our government is doing the exact opposite to what the majority of Canadians want, whether it is on capital punishment, going easy on criminals, failing to cut government spending or on the unemployment insurance program. It is time to not only listen to the people but to act on what grassroots Canadians are telling us.

Reformers trust the people to make the right choices for this country. Reformers believe that democracy is not something that we practice once every four or five years in the voting booth. Reformers believe that democracy is something that has to be worked at and each and every day we serve our constituents as members of Parliament.

I have told the constituents of Yorkton—Melville that I am their voice in the House. I sincerely hope that each and every member has the courage to ask the tough questions and to represent their constituents' wishes in the House as Reformers do every day.

Let us get our UI program on a solid foundation. We would not buy a horse with three legs. We would make sure that horse is solid and firm. That is what we have to do. We have to get principles in place.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Landry (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I listened earlier to the speech made by my colleague and there is one thing that I would like to add first, namely that the way they are going now, if they cut where they would like to, he would not even be able to afford an artificial leg for his three-legged horse.

But the tenth point he made was about eliminating all abuses to the UI system and I would like to comment on that. You know, we all agree that people should not be abusing this program. However, I would like him to tell me first what percentage of claimants abuse the system and second, since unemployment insurance is financed by the men and women of Canada, of Quebec, are we going to penalize all the members of a family with ten children, let us say, when only one is guilty? I have a logical answer to that and I would like him to clarify the tenth point he made, when he said that we must put an end to all abuses of the system. Does it mean that it is necessary to penalize all the people of Canada and Quebec?