

Government Orders

It is time we recognized once again the value of work and the personal and economic freedom that a job brings. It is time we recognized the contribution each job makes to the national economy and the well-being of our nation. When we have people working we have a nation that is flourishing. It is time we stopped paying people who choose to be unemployed.

Canada does stand at the crossroads. If we do not sharpen our competitive edge we may lose the comfortable standard of living Canadians now take for granted. The government is not going to sit on the sidelines and it is not going to mislead Canadians. We are getting Canada ready to compete in the new global economy of the 21st century.

The hon. members opposite cannot lead, so what way are we going to go? Will they get in the way or will they follow Canadians to build a common prosperous future together? When we are all working we can maintain our standard of living and the social safety net and social services for those people who really need them.

We should not pay people who voluntarily quit, but we will help people who quit for just cause.

Mr. Cid Samson (Timmins—Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the rhetoric of the member for Calgary Southwest.

I am absolutely stunned by some of the things this member is trying to make Canadians believe. It is absolutely incredible that this member would stand in this House and try to tell us that 225,000 people in this country voluntarily quit with absolutely no just cause simply because they wanted to sit at home and become couch potatoes.

She cannot give us the evidence. She cannot show us in detail the number of people who quit with just cause, who cite sexual harassment, who want to move with their spouse, or who want to attend a sick child. She does not have those figures. She cannot tell us how many of those people appealed the decision to end their benefits, won, and then had those decisions reversed and overturned. She cannot give us any of those figures, yet she has the nerve to stand in this House and try to tell us that these people have to pay their share to get the deficit reduced. This is absolutely incredible.

The member misses the point that there are severe flaws in the system as it exists today. This legislation does absolutely nothing to rectify any of those flaws. It does nothing to rectify the inconsistencies in the decisions being made across this country. It does absolutely nothing to put people back to work.

I would like to ask the minister to give me the figures to prove that 225,000 people are quitting without just cause. It is absolutely absurd and she does not have those figures. I would like to ask her to prove her statement.

Mrs. Sparrow: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my address, there are 225,000 people in Canada who quit their jobs voluntarily. There was no just cause. It cost the employees and the employers \$1 billion from the UI fund. These people did not have just cause, of which there are 40 areas listed. Why did they quit? They quit for no reason at all.

• (1755)

An hon. member: Not true.

Mrs. Sparrow: They had worked their entrance time. That is 225,000 people.

I spent quite a bit of time in the UI centre in my riding. I went in there to deliberately speak to the Canada Employment Centre staff. I have to say the staff members at Centre 70 in Calgary are superb. They go out of their way to assist people. They hear the claims from both the worker and the employee. Indeed, if there is any benefit of doubt I can assure you the ruling is in favour of the claimant.

One thing we have to realize is that anybody who quits because of sexual harassment, which the member mentioned, anybody who quits because they have a sick child to take care of, anybody who quits because their spouse has been moved, anybody who quits due to racial discrimination will be able to collect UI. They will be able to prove it. Now, do not fool Canadians.

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Mr. Speaker my question is for the member for Calgary Southwest.

I had the pleasure this morning of meeting the building and construction trades representative, Guy Dumoulin, who informed me the government did not approach the building trades of construction to ask their