

Oral Questions

● (1115)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COMMISSION**TREATMENT OF OLDER WORKERS**

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. There is a growing concern in the country with respect to plans of the Unemployment Insurance Commission to crack down on older workers.

The Minister knows that many older workers, male as well as female, do not have the physical capacity to accept any job which is offered to them. Many of them have spent their entire lives in certain skills and trades and it is difficult at a later age to transfer into a new type of work. Many older workers have spent the greater period of their lives in one community and find it difficult to relocate.

This Party is in favour of cracking down on abuses but, in doing so, it is important to consider the special situation of these older workers. Would the Minister assure us that she will bring the considerations I have mentioned relating to older workers to the attention of the Unemployment Insurance Commission and ensure that it will deal with older workers in a humane and compassionate nature under any new initiatives?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. The Hon. Member is right to be concerned about older workers. Too often their plight has been ignored. Programs have been developed for one group within society too often at the expense of others. I give the Hon. Member assurance that this Government is working on programs and new approaches which will be able to help workers who, too often, have crashed into the future of the new work world and have had no resources to help them.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING DIFFICULTIES FACED BY OLDER WORKERS

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Recently, the Minister indicated that she was prepared to hold consultations with the provinces, business and labour concerning these new employment and training programs, and referred especially to youth related problems. Could the Minister assure the House now that during these consultations special consideration will be given also to the employment and training problems of older workers?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker I have already held meetings with

representatives of both business and labour and I can assure the hon. Member that the issue of older people and workers is quite important to us.

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[English]

EMPLOYMENT**APPLICATION OF CHARTER OF RIGHTS**

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, in the spring of 1985, Section 15, the equality section in the Charter of Rights, will come into effect. That Section, first of all, outlaws discrimination on the basis of age, among other things. It also provides for affirmative action programs. Would the Minister assure us that, in re-examining the laws and programs of her Department, the provisions of the Charter dealing with discrimination against the aged will be respected? And would the Minister consult with the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the Minister of Labour, and other Ministers who are concerned with this problem, so that there will be fairness in the marketplace for our older workers?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I will tell the Hon. Member that a cabinet committee under the direction of the Minister of Justice has already begun to meet on those very critical issues. I can assure the Hon. Member, as can other hon. members of this Cabinet, that the lot of older workers will not be overlooked or ignored. The matter is very critical.

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IMMIGRATION**1985 ENTRY LEVELS—REUNIFICATION OF FAMILIES**

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. On November 21, when the Minister reduced the ceiling on immigration levels for 1985, she claimed in this House that family reunification would not be affected. I hope the Minister now realizes that this is only partly true and that the ceiling does include the vast majority of relatives, that is, older children, married children, nephews, and nieces. Would the Minister, in this time of economic recovery, recognize that immigrants to contribute to a recovery? They create jobs, they are willing workers, and are consumers and customers in the Canadian market. Will the Minister stop punishing families and raise the level to at least 100,000, as my caucus has been urging?

● (1120)

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that the Hon. Member, having been in Cabinet, would have known how the immigration levels were arrived at and that there is no