

Government Orders

• (1220)

I would suggest that the consistency to which the minister has referred would not be there. Perhaps the minister could respond to those two questions in full detail.

Mrs. Collins: Madam Speaker, I would like to advise my hon. colleague who raised the question of training, which is important. It is an area in which we have been developing this co-operation between our two departments. We are in the process, and it should probably be completed by now, of developing a national training package. It will be used to train about 17,000 unemployment insurance employees located at more than 440 Canada Employment Centres right across Canada.

Along with the package of materials for all employees, all staff who deal with claimants will also be attending a training workshop which will include video and discussion packages. It will involve the participation of local women's groups and persons with expertise on discrimination and sexual harassment.

These are going to be held across the country. We have been in close co-operation in developing this training package. The program is to be completed by April 1993, when the proposed legislation comes into effect.

We are also working on evaluation mechanisms, because they are important as well, to examine how the training is going and how effective it is. That will obviously be ongoing. The initial round will be for everyone and then we will be evaluating and determining what areas could be strengthened.

This is a very important plus. Quite honestly, I do not know if it has even been done in this way before. We certainly have not been involved to this extent before and we appreciate the opportunity. We have had a lot of experience in this area and have a lot of links back to the community.

I do not know exactly what the cost will be because a lot of it will be local. We will bring together people on a local basis and the national package materials will be funded by employment and immigration.

With respect to the issue of the board of referees, it is given the discretion. There could be circumstances in which it would not be appropriate. However, it is very clearly provided for in the legislation that upon the

application of the claimant these hearings can be held in private and without media attention, and that is very important. As I understand from past experience, these cases very rarely get to a board of referees and they are in fact adjudicated at that first level.

Given the circumstances I have already discussed about the benefit of the doubt it is unlikely that many will have to go to the board of referees. I hope not.

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches—Woodbine): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up on a case scenario my colleague for Timmins—Chapleau mentioned in his contribution. This scenario was also raised by the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond.

It centres around the whole question of just cause, particularly as it applies to sexual harassment. I have a case at the present time in which a young woman about two months ago was finally forced to quit her job because her employer was continually making remarks about her appearance.

He would grade her on a daily basis on a scale from one to ten. Today she looked like a nine and tomorrow she was graded as a number seven. This went on for six months. Although she requested him to stop he continued and persisted in doing so. It finally got to the point where she quit. She was immediately disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits.

Subsequently, she appealed to the board of referees. She had the hearing. I told her to tell it exactly what was said and how it was said, et cetera. They overturned the disqualification and she was reinstated.

Now I want to deal with the comfort level. The board of referees forwards its decision to the employer. I do not think that is going to change under this system. The employer in turn appealed and is now under appeal to the umpire. He does not deny her story at all.

How will this change? This 21-year old woman had this indignity forced upon her in the first place. She had to go to the board of referees and explain. It overturned the decision, advised the employer of its decision, and he has now appealed it. It is a small work place and he went around and convinced other young women in that place of employment to write letters to the umpire saying that he did not sexually harass them. That is an exact case. On a privileged basis I am prepared to provide the minister with a copy of the decisions, letters, et cetera.