

Oral Questions

to look at it in a comprehensive way and maybe she may change her mind.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Madam Speaker, the 1.6 million unemployed Canadians will not find the minister's statement, by any objective means, useful to them in their future and what they can see as the future of their children.

[*Translation*]

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance another question. Women are always the first victims of the economic crisis. This morning, Statistics Canada showed that once again.

If the government does not want to answer the appeals from those it calls bleeding hearts, those it accuses of whining, how will it answer the 60,000 more women who are unemployed?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, of course I am concerned about the impact upon women. I am also concerned about what seems to be the position of the New Democratic Party and others in this House that they condone the abuse of the UI system. They not only condone it, they are encouraging it, and aiding and abetting it. I will not be associated with that kind of a position.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Madam Speaker, the government has made it very clear they do not care about the unemployed of this country. They are not prepared to bring in policies to address the most serious job crisis in the history of Canada.

The minister and members of the government talk about bleeding hearts. Yesterday the Minister of Employment and Immigration said in this House that if a woman is being sexually harassed, "she should just quit her job." This is being outrageously insensitive. The minister has displayed a complete lack of understanding of the labour market and of the problems that working people have in the labour market.

I want to say to the Deputy Prime Minister, when his government is making statements like that which deny the realities of the work life, will he ask that minister to resign and will his government apologize to the women of Canada?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): No, Madam Speaker, because the outrageous statement of the leader of the New Democratic Party and the outrageous statements of the president of the New Democratic are absolutely and totally uncalled for. The hon. leader of the New Democratic Party should ask for the resignation of her president.

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. The government insists that sexual harassment is just cause for those who quit their jobs voluntarily, but a search of the court decisions shows this is just not so. Indeed, a handbook on unemployment insurance appeals admits that just cause is extremely hard to prove.

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister why will he not set out a definition of sexual harassment as just cause, and do it today?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Minister of State (Youth) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I think my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, yesterday stated clearly that sexual harassment is just cause to leave employment and that the UI department has been dealing with such cases for years.

I would recall to the hon. member that sexual harassment was included in the legislation, Bill C-21, as just cause for leaving a job; a bill that the opposition delayed for over one year.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Madam Speaker, there are delays and delays. I was here and I am proud of it. However, there are other outrageous matters that this government deals with. It does not take care of its own public servants.

[*Translation*]

My next question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Yesterday the minister of employment said that it was time for a government with enough "balls" to face reality.

Now it is clear why the government just does not understand the serious issue of sexual harassment.