

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

DENIAL OF BENEFITS TO FRESHWATER FISHERMEN

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans I should like to direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. Over the past three years I have made a number of representations to the Minister of Finance, the old one and the new one, and to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the old one and the new one, with regard to the inequity of freshwater fishermen having to pay into the Unemployment Insurance fund and, by legislation, being unable to draw benefits because their fishing season does not coincide with the fishing season on the coasts. When will the Deputy Prime Minister have the Government do something to eliminate this injustice?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I should like to answer the Hon. Member's question. He will be aware that three or four weeks ago the Supreme Court handed down a decision in the Vicky Silk case which abolishes any special regulations that can be applied to fishermen's benefits and which will create substantial confusion in the fishing areas and also in the application of benefits. It is our intention to bring in amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act to clarify the situation and to deal with the problem that the Hon. Member recognizes.

I hope that Hon. Members opposite will ensure that such amendment, along with other improvements to the Unemployment Insurance Act, receive speedy dispatch in the House so that people like this will not be unduly affected by those kinds of decisions.

REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT OF ACT TO ASSIST FISHERMEN

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Madam Speaker, would the Minister of Employment and Immigration consider bringing in that single amendment on one day and not tying it to a bunch of other conditions, so that this injustice can be corrected immediately?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I would think it important that a number of other issues related to the Unemployment Insurance Act be dealt with at the same time. I think of the entrance requirement, which has a sunset clause which expires on June 4 this year. I am sure the Hon. Member and his Party would not like to see the entrance requirement for the application of the Unemployment Insurance Act changed at the same time. Many Members of his Party have been making strong recommendations on things like maternity benefits. If we could get the full approval and co-operation of both Parties, when we could do as he wishes and have the amending Bill passed in one day. I am sure that a lot of Canadians would be very grateful for that.

Oral Questions

THE ADMINISTRATION

PENALTIES FOR BREAKING PRIVY COUNCIL OATH

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. I wonder if the Minister could tell the House what the penalties are for a Privy Councillor who breaks his or her oath?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): No, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, this being one of the most serious oaths in our society, it is interesting that the Deputy Prime Minister will not share with us what the penalties are.

COMPLIANCE WITH OATH

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): I wonder if the Deputy Prime Minister could share with us what mechanisms are in place for determining whether or not a Privy Councillor has broken the oath?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member is asking for legal opinions. One of the established rules of the House is not to provide them in the Question Period.

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PUBLIC WORKS

TORONTO HARBOURFRONT ANNOUNCEMENT—PLEA FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CNE GROUNDS

Mr. Scott Fennell (Ontario): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works. I notice that four Ministers from Toronto are absent today. Obviously they are announcing that the Government is sinking more money into Harbourfront.

Has the Government contemplated the fact that this is an entertainment area and that the Canadian National Exhibition grounds require broadening and upgrading to provide better trade facilities? Would the money not be better spent on the Canadian National Exhibition grounds, which are a year-round trade area?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I have had occasion to visit the site where this work has been undertaken. I was very much impressed by what has been done and by the potential of the area.

As Hon. Members know, the development of waterfronts in many of our major cities is very much tied to the improvement of the life of the citizens who live there. In fact I looked at the figures, and it is obvious that the citizens of Toronto are voting with their feet by visiting the site and using it. As we improve it, and I think the announcement was made today, the site will be used more and more. In fact I would like to take this