

*Government Orders*

● (1125)

One could even wonder if that is not “unconstitutional” under the Charter. The minister selects pilot projects and, because of this, legislation, the application of which is usually general, no longer applies to a prescribed group.

Of course, we can argue that the idea is always to improve on the existing legislation. But the fact of the matter is that it is not the case. It is not. Various conditions may be added that do not apply to other employees, as was recently the case in the adjustment program for ground fishermen.

So, this measure in itself would have required that we take a closer look at it and ask ourselves if Canada really wanted to introduce such a discretionary measure, and give a minister—incidentally, a minister whose department is so large that one cannot help but wonder if, as in the case of the British Empire, the sun never sets on it, and how the minister can keep up his fences—that much power, without any possibility for ordinary citizens, except perhaps through constitutional remedies not provided for by the act, to protect otherwise recognized rights.

As you know, in the context of unemployment insurance, there is always a tribunal where, among other parties, workers are represented. I would have much more to say, from the bottom of my heart, on this bill which affects all Canadians, a bill that divides Canada, a bill that abandons Atlantic provinces. We will discuss the adjustment program for groundfisheries, but you are not going to come and tell me that this program alone will revitalize the economy of that region. As I said earlier, Atlantic Canada and Quebec are hard hit, savagely hit, while this government blows its own trumpet, boasts, brags about being a national unity government.

Yet, among the political parties represented in this House, only the Bloc called attention to this problem. I am pointing this out because I noticed it and I would like the hon. members opposite to notice it as well. They are of course bound by ministerial discretion. The Reform Party failed to do its job as the national party that it claims to be. Let me assure you however that our vision in the Bloc is not to destroy Canada.

We have tried to find our place within this Canada and the response we got was “no”. So, yes, we want to leave this confederation, but not destroy Canada, quite the contrary. All our action in this place, whether on cultural, social and even economic issues, is fundamentally constructive. Yes, we want to leave Canada, but we want our future friendly neighbour to be a strong one as well.

[English]

**Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on Bill C-17, the budget implementation act. In my remarks I will attempt to give an overview of the Reform Party's position or, more accurately, positions on the assortment of measures that constitute Bill C-17 and explain why we will be voting against the bill on third reading.

I will comment on the objections Reform has with certain aspects of the bill, but I will also give praise where praise is due. In fact, many of the measures contained in Bill C-17 are supported by the Reform Party.

Before getting into Bill C-17 I would like to take this one last opportunity to speak of the government's budget and to the concerns my party has repeatedly expressed in the weeks and months since the budget was presented to this House of Commons. Those ideas we feel have not been heard as they should and have fallen somewhat on deaf ears.

● (1130)

I would like to make four points with regard to the budget as I see what has happened in this assembly since February 22. First of all, it is very clear that the government does not have a concrete deficit reduction plan. We find that most of the cuts were done in a haphazard way. There is no an over-arching direction given to those cuts. Most of the cuts are merely a combination of what we call Conservative policies and were a continuation of thrusts that were set prior to the government taking over in the fall of 1993.

Cuts to such programs as unemployment insurance which were so eloquently talked about a few moments ago and the defence policy were taken before any comprehensive foreign policy review or a social policy review were put in place. It was ad hoc in nature at best.

The target that the government has set for itself, what is called the 3 per cent solution, which is supposed to be based on the Maastricht treaty is an aberration of that treaty and not an accurate reflection. It does not measure what is called the net debt as it is in the Maastricht treaty. The Maastricht treaty talks about all of the net debt of a country. In the formula presented here by the government, provincial and municipal debts are not taken into consideration in seeing the difficulties we face as a country in terms of expending money and revenue sources that are available to us.

The actions of the government are not a true reflection of what I would call a meaningful Maastricht treaty 3 per cent policy. I feel there is a gap between what should be done and what is being done by the government.