

Government Orders

• (1645)

I dare say the thinking of most parliamentarians who returned and have been here for a number of years—some have been here for a number of decades—has changed in terms of current realities. I like to think of myself as a small reformer. I have been one ever since I have been involved in municipal politics and in community activity preceding that. I will continue to be a reformer a long time after I am gone from this place. In terms of high tech hurting small business, I guess in the new, changing economy we as a country have to make sure we are playing a major role.

I refer to my experience in the federal riding of Waterloo. It is the home of the University of Waterloo, an excellent technical university. It also has a good arts program. Sir Wilfrid Laurier University is down the street and is very strong in business. In our community we are very much players in the new economy. We are seeing the creation of thousands and thousands of jobs. I can only say that it is working for us. We have the lowest unemployment figures in Canada at 7.1 per cent. Of course many of our firms are exporting. It is amazing how many of our export firms are bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the Canadian economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Mercier—Fisheries; the hon. member for Yukon—Employment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, I am glad you allow me this new opportunity to talk about Bill C-17.

Ever since the finance committee formed a sub-committee to study Bill C-17, a measure implementing the largest reform of the unemployment insurance program ever undertaken by a federal government and freezing the salary of public servants, among other things, I have closely followed this matter, as a member of the committee and as an opposition member provided with limited means. I have tried to do a little more than my Liberal friends, I have tried to make democracy speak.

You know that, despite the fact that this bill is the largest reform ever done of social programs in general and unemployment insurance in particular, the Liberal government had planned on only two days of hearings, including one with senior officials who were to explain to sub-committee members the provisions and technical interpretations of Bill C-17. Without the intervention of the Bloc Quebecois which demanded that we make a more thorough study of such a fundamental piece of legislation for social programs and for the future of many

communities in Quebec and Canada, we would not have had, like we did, the equivalent of a week and a half to hear witnesses.

I can understand why, this morning, when the secretary to the minister of industry, trade and commerce rose to speak on Bill C-17, he did not dare speak about it, because he was ashamed of that bill. Selling Bill C-17 is an impossible task.

• (1650)

That is why he naively spoke about his recent trip to China. Do you realize, Mr. Speaker, that they are proposing a \$5.5 billion cut in the UI system over the next three years. It is all about the despair of the many individuals who must endure the evils of unemployment, the plague of unemployment, in Quebec and in Canada, but the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry would rather tell us about his trip to China.

I was outraged when I heard him. I controlled myself, since control is still the best attitude, but I want to say now to my Liberal colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, that the way he is dealing with this bill is outrageous.

You were here this morning, Mr. Speaker, so you heard as well this same member, and others around him from the Liberal Party of Canada, shouting down duly elected members of the Bloc Quebecois and tarnishing their reputation. Not only according to Quebecers who elected us, but also to Canadians in general, on basic issues such as the future of social programs, the economic policy, the disgraceful benefits enjoyed by the richest Canadians—family trusts—the Bloc Quebecois is the real Official Opposition.

Without us, many more objectionable measures like the ones implemented since the February 23 budget and measures that are unpopular and harmful to ordinary citizens, to taxpayers, would have been adopted by the government since it took power.

When a bill or government measure is indefensible, it is normal that members opposite resort rapidly to insults since it is the only weapon they have to sell a plan that is rotten from the start as far as unemployment insurance is concerned.

As my colleague, the hon. member for Mercier, did this morning, I would like to point out that close to 60 per cent of the planned cuts in unemployment insurance for 1995-96 will hit two regions: first, the Atlantic, and second, Quebec. It is 60 per cent even though these two regions have only one third of Canada's population.

Indeed, in 1995-96, the Atlantic provinces, with only 8.5 per cent of the population, will lose \$630 million, bearing 26 per cent of the cuts for that year. The same thing will happen in Quebec, where the federal government will cut \$735 million in unemployment insurance benefits, or 33 per cent of the total for