

Government Orders

What was this production yesterday about competition, competitiveness and prosperity? What was this all about? All about taxes on businesses. Only a dime a week, a dime a week, a dime a week. How many of us remember what the original contributions to Canada Pension were? How many of us remember what the original contributions to the unemployment insurance fund were? Does a dime a week not sound pretty easy? Maybe it was a little more.

I guess if we really think it is a social priority, if we really think social policy then this is a prime social policy and we should have a fund. What kind of a social policy is this bill? This is a social policy that only looks after some, not everyone, just some. Who are the some? They are the people who work for the companies, where there are enough assets in the till to hire a trustee or receiver. When we ask what these fellows earn it is sort of indicated that you could not get a receiver for less than \$10,000 guarantee. So you had to have an asset or an estate of an insolvent person that was worth a few dollars in order to get a receiver or trustee appointed in the first place.

We are going to have social policy to look after the workers of insolvent estates where there is enough money in the estate that the bank or the person who has the security is prepared to pony up enough money up front to guarantee the trustee. Those are the very estates that there is enough money in to look after wages in almost every case, in almost every case. But these are the estates of bankrupts or insolvent people who are going to make sure that the creditor does not get hurt, that the state takes it up, that a fund takes it up, and who contributes to the fund? The little guy in business, who runs a business that when it gets into trouble does not have enough in assets to guarantee a trustee or a receiver \$10,000.

• (1650)

What happens? Nobody puts it in bankruptcy, nobody puts in a receiver, and his employees, they get nothing. Over half the people who lose their wages as a result of an insolvency get zip. Here we have a tax that applies across the whole community. That is why it is only a dime a person. It applies across the whole community. That is all. It applies across the whole community but only

people who work for employers where there is enough in the insolvency to cover the cost of a trustee can make a claim.

If we sat back and said "well, the premium ought to be against those people whose employees would likely be able to claim", in other words big firms, I suspect you would find the premium not a dime but maybe more like a dollar a week, plus, plus, plus. So we have a peculiar situation.

The Colter commission was made up of people who were professionals in the bankruptcy business. Who were their clients? Usually big secured creditors: banks, trust companies, RoyNat, these people. Of course they would like this because it is easy to administer an estate if you do not have to worry about these nagging employees asking: "Where is my money?" You just say: "Well, go see the government and you will get paid". Of course it is good for them, of course it is good for them.

However, the issue is: Is this good social policy? Is this the kind of social justice this country should have? Is this the kind of industrial legislation we should have? Is this the way we ought to be going?

I say to this House: no, it is a time when the minister and this House paid attention to its committees. They went back on this legislation and redesigned it.

There are ways. The minister knows there are ways to recognize unemployment earlier than the day a person applies at the UIC office. Yes, you can anti-date claims. Yes you could do something, but surely not this way. Surely, this bill must not pass in its present form.

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to get back to a few things my hon. friend raised during his speech.

I appreciate the fact that he mentioned the committee looked at a few things like creditors in their takeover of assets, which he mentioned as a first point; the reorganization process; the revindication of goods; and the fact that we have reduced the Crown's priority. We have reduced it by a certain amount, all the money that is due to the Crown and not the money raised by the employers in trust, if I may. The deductions will stay there.

I have a question for the hon. member. This approach of super priority is very attractive. I discussed that with