

Government Orders

use their potential to the fullest and nonetheless become unemployed through no fault of their own, a compassionate society has in place a scheme to which they contribute that will provide for the necessities when they are without any earnings.

[Translation]

Bill C-21 is not designed to identify and exclude from the system the few dishonest people and cheaters who are abusing it. Rather, it will deprive the most destitute workers of benefits that allow them to meet their needs when they are out of a job.

[English]

Bill C-21 is about money. A government that has slashed spending on training by \$700 million a year since 1984 now wants to make up for its own failures. It now wants to gouge money for training programs from the pockets of workers and their employers. Cruelly and cold-bloodedly it is telling the unemployed that they will have no income or reduced income when they lose their jobs because a greedy government needs their money.

Bill C-21 is about privatization. The government is opting out of any public financing responsibility for unemployment and regional disparities that result from fiscal, economic and trade policies for which it is responsible.

[Translation]

Bill C-21 will have the effect of creating a class of workers forever dependent on the whims of the market and forced to accept second-rate, dangerous and underpaid jobs.

[English]

Bill C-21 is about shutting down rural Canada and turning out the lights on Atlantic Canada, remote regions and small communities across the country.

Let me put some flesh and bones on these points by turning to some of the amendments that would have made this not a good piece of legislation but slightly less damaging. These are amendments which the government, by closure and obstruction, has prevented even being discussed.

[Translation]

Bill C-21 will crush the hopes of hundreds of thousands of Canadians who wish to participate fully in the growth and prosperity of this great country.

[English]

The government says it wants to train those who most need training. Those who most need training are those at the bottom of the employment ladder who have the hardest time getting and keeping a job, who have short term sporadic employment. These are the very people who will be shut out in greatest numbers by this bill from qualifying for unemployment insurance, and if they do not qualify for unemployment insurance they do not qualify for the training that their dollars have paid for.

If this government's intention is truly to train those who need it most, why would it refuse to consider an amendment that would allow workers to qualify for training after a minimum 10 weeks of employment? Shutting them out of benefits is one thing, but shutting them out of training is deplorable. Those who need training most are those already at a disadvantage in the changing workforce. They are women earning only 66 cents for every dollar a man earns. Persons with disabilities are at a similar disadvantage both in income and training opportunities, and the employment disadvantage of persons of visible minorities or aboriginal peoples is already well documented.

Why then will the minister and the opposition not even allow this House to debate an amendment that would guarantee these groups equitable access to training programs, programs I remind the House that these people pay for through their contributions to the unemployment insurance fund?

• (1630)

I suggest this amendment is unacceptable to the government because it is not interested in the unemployed of this country. It is not interested in equity. It is not interested in allowing people to reach their full potential regardless of age, gender, colour or ethnic origin. It is only interested in taking money from the unemployed and turning it over to the private sector to train those who can most quickly and easily be trained.