

*Government Orders*

attempt to prevent the government's fiscal house from crumbling and come crashing down.

The implementation of Bill C-17 and the budget generally represent the removal of yet another cornerstone of our financial house. It is on the verge of collapse and accordingly our party and I must oppose it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-17 is a direct result of the finance minister's great budget. So just about anything having to do with the budget will impact on Bill C-17.

Instead of touching on every aspect of the cuts achieved at the expense of the unemployed, I will move in a more specific direction.

• (1230)

The cuts in the finance minister's budget affect the unemployed, seniors and, in large part, the national defence budget. The defence cuts were wanted by the Liberal Party before it took office; we in the Bloc Québécois also wanted them so I will not question their validity. Of course, I cannot help but point out that the military college in Saint-Jean is not and will never be part of the acceptable cuts, let alone justified by economic arguments which, in my opinion and that of my Bloc colleagues, have never been proven.

However, section 7.1 of Bill C-17, which deals with national defence cuts, seems vague and shortsighted to me.

These cuts will translate into civilian and military layoffs. Under section 7.1 of this bill, payments will be offered or given to employees who have lost or will lose their jobs due to civilian and military personnel reductions. We must also speak up about staff cuts at the national defence research centres.

Section 7.1 is vague regarding the duration and amount of payments to national defence laid-off workers. It is also shortsighted because it does not offer future prospects to the people who have lost their jobs as a result of the finance minister's budget.

The old saying "instead of giving a fish to the hungry, it is better to teach them how to fish" can be applied at many levels in our society. Why, as the Bloc Québécois suggested during the election campaign, did the government not implement programs to convert defence industries to civilian production, in line with the red bible of this good government full of good intentions but very reluctant to take action?

When I see companies such as Paramax and Oerlikon after the EH-101 helicopter contract was cancelled, and also in the case of Oerlikon after the end of the cold war, I wonder what markets these companies can turn to.

Unfortunately, I think that the programs under section 7.1 providing for payments to those who will be affected by the cuts leave little hope to the many highly-skilled workers with very limited retraining opportunities, given our current economic environment.

Where do we find in Bill C-17 an incentive to employment recovery? Throughout the campaign, the Liberal Party kept talking about jobs, jobs, jobs, but we find very little incentives, if any. Generally speaking, in life or in the private sector, when corrective action is taken in response to some alarming situation, you try to plan different options.

What options has the government included in Bill C-17 to promote recovery? I have met with people in my riding and they do not speak highly of this kind of reform which does nothing to resolve the real problems. The gap between the social classes is increasing irreversibly. The middle class, which is the government's major source of income, is starting to wonder if the measures we take are not aimed at its elimination. Overtaxed and competing against the underground economy, the middle class could hardly believe the budget. Why were big businesses and trusts still spared, while members of the middle class, who, given the present economic situation, have started to join the ranks of the unemployed, were being squarely targeted by the government?

I said previously that if you taught someone in need how to manage instead of giving him money, that person would become self-sufficient. Here is an original example of job creation incentive. My colleague from Joliette has introduced Bill C-230, which is an amendment to Bill C-17. This amendment would allow resourceful unemployed people to create jobs for themselves and maybe even for others. There are many workers who were employed for eight, ten or twelve years, who were laid off because of the economic situation and who, thanks to their entrepreneurial spirit, created small businesses, thus losing all the UI contributions they made over those ten or twelve years.

• (1235)

Bill C-230 would allow a worker who becomes unemployed and decides to invest in a small business to receive, over a certain period, 50 per cent of the UI benefits to which he would otherwise be entitled if he did not have the will and the desire to start a venture. The break-in period for a small business is somewhere between three and eight months. Such a measure would be an extraordinary boost to job creation!

If a person who worked and paid UI contributions for many years does not have the initiative to create something, that person is entitled to UI benefits while staying at home doing nothing. Yet, if that same person has the will to start a business and needs help at the beginning, he or she simply loses entitlement to UI benefits. If Bill C-17 included measures such as