

*Supply**[English]*

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, with great respect, we have all learned in this House to recognize that the member for Hamilton East does not live by the criticisms she makes of others.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Would the hon. member for Hamilton East have something to add?

Ms. Copps: Yes. I do not want to insult dogs. I take back everything that has to be taken back.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Copps: I think first of all that we absolutely must talk about it and deal with this issue. The reason I mentioned the comments of the members for Abitibi and Jonquière and others is that I was glad to see when Parliament was recessed that some Conservative members were going to join us in solidarity to fight this bill which is so unjust. Several of them—perhaps even a dozen—were going to vote against the government, but now that they have the opportunity here in the House, they do not have the courage to take a stand for or against. That is the important thing. The members for Abitibi and Jonquière cannot be professional crybabies. They must be here to do their duty for the unemployed.

[English]

The member says I am on my broom. When I read in the paper that members on the government side were coming to their senses and recognizing that this particular law penalizes women and the under-employed I was very happy to hear that at least six, eight, or possibly a dozen members of the Conservative Party might break ranks to join us in opposing this legislation.

An hon. member: Dream on.

Ms. Copps: The member says dream on. That is true, because one of the members who was the chief spokesperson of those in the Conservative Party seeking change has wilted before our very eyes.

He now tells us that he is not going to be for this amendment and he is not going to be against it, that he is going to abstain. I say to Conservative members that on this issue they either line up with the workers or ride with General Motors, to paraphrase a great Liberal who

understood Liberal principles. On this issue, I am happy that my party can absolutely and categorically disassociate itself from the comments and attitude of the minister of employment.

An hon. member: They cannot have it both ways.

Ms. Copps: The minister of employment said:

[Translation]

“Some people want to vacation in Florida and I do not want to pay them for that.” Another member, this one from Montreal, said right out that he had seen unemployed people from Quebec cash their UI cheque in Florida.

An hon. member: That’s impossible.

Ms. Copps: Well, if it is true, they should charge them under the Criminal Code. That is fraud. If they have evidence, they should declare it instead of politicking. In Montreal, they say openly and on the record that they are totally against this bill. Then they come back here but stay away when the time to vote comes.

[English]

What is really sad about this initiative is that when the government introduced its economic statement we were looking for a new economic direction. We know right now that Canada has the highest level of unemployment of the G-7 countries. We know that the number of chronic unemployed in this country, the long-term unemployed, has doubled to almost a million people, 806,000.

We also know that the number of part-time workers who would like to work full time and who want to work has increased from 400,000 to almost 700,000. Therefore, the issue is not about penalizing those people who may have to leave a job for good reason but about creating an economic climate in which people who want to work have the right to work.

When the Minister for International Trade commented in the House of Commons on the 10,000 people in my area who have lost their jobs as a direct result of his bad negotiations he did not attack the source. He did not attack the unfair complaint levelled by the United States. He blamed the Canadian workers. He blamed the Canadian workers who he characterized as being unproductive and behind the times.