

cases, even though some safeguards were provided, the burden of proof, as some of my friends said a while ago, falls on the employee. The process can be long and painful. Very often, there is a four week delay before preliminary hearings and an even longer wait for the appeal procedure, all that time without any benefits. The process usually becomes a confrontation between the former employee and the employer. As we all know, it is sometimes difficult to prove harassment, whether sexual or otherwise, because former colleagues are usually reluctant to testify, fearing for their own jobs.

This bill gives new powers to employers. For example, employees will be less inclined to resign, even though the work environment might be deteriorating, because they know they will not qualify for unemployment insurance.

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: Honourable senators, I must notify you that the honourable senator has already spoken for 15 minutes.

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): He has only a few minutes left.

Senator Hébert: Bosses can blackmail their employees for concessions. I have here an article from *Le Devoir* of February 4, entitled "Bosses already tightening screws", which shows convincingly that this bill will do employees incalculable harm. I quote:

Under the cover of the forthcoming changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act, opportunistic employers have already started to tighten the screws on their employees and demanded substantial concessions from them. *Le Devoir* is aware of two striking examples: the first concerns the École supérieure de danse du Québec, which invoked the new unemployment insurance provisions to reduce summer leave for its teachers, and Litho Montérégie, which cut the salaries of half of its employees, the most senior ones, by 30 per cent — take it or leave it.

That says a lot about the nature of this bill.

Many commentators have criticized the new measures as arbitrary and inflexible, which the article in *Le Devoir* confirms. Furthermore, since the burden of proof is on the former employee, there is no more presumption of innocence. The rigidity of these measures will probably lead to many appeals, clogging up the system terribly. Legitimate claims will be rejected and people who quit for a valid reason or are dismissed unjustly will not be entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. As Alain Dubuc said in *La Presse* on January 25:

Because it offers nothing to take account of the grey areas, the bill in its present form is inhuman.

That is the word to describe this bill: "inhuman".

In fact, Bill C-113 is so odious and inhuman that it has been criticized by some government members and — can you believe it? — Senator Chaput-Rolland.

[English]

• (1550)

Accordingly, Senator Chaput-Rolland is quoted in an Ottawa *Sun* article dated February 15 as having said, and I am quoting my dear colleague:

I am very concerned about the consequences of the (UI) law and by the minister's stubbornness in not seeing those consequences.

Should I repeat it in case you didn't get it? Senator Chaput-Rolland is saying:

I am very concerned about the consequences of the (UI) law and by the minister's stubbornness in not seeing those consequences.

In the same article, the senator says she hopes the government finds the resolve to protect the less fortunate. She speaks like a Liberal.

Senator Frith: Glad to see her Liberalism hasn't completely worn away.

Senator Hébert: She fears too many unemployed will suffer from the time they appeal their case to the day an arbitrator rules. Well, I certainly hope the good senator was not misquoted or that she was not simply uttering vapid rhetoric. I certainly hope that, this one time, she remembers her words when it is time to vote on the issue.

Senator Chaput-Rolland's apparent misgivings about this bill are interesting and raise questions as to the government's real motivation for tabling it. I wonder if the free trade agreement could have anything to do with this wholesale assault on the unemployed. Perhaps the Canadian Labour Congress's brief on Bill C-113 might provide an answer to that question, and I quote:

Free Trade, the GST and punishing monetary policy along with Bill C-21 have left the groundwork for this current bill. Now these policies have created massive unemployment, thereby heavily increasing UI expenditures, the government is proposing to further attack the very program designed to protect people from such policies... Clearly, this legislation is designed to make the victims pay.