

Government Orders

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-113. I regret that the member who is the unemployment critic of my caucus was unable to speak because he had to go to his riding for his nomination. We had asked the government to co-operate and delay the vote until tomorrow but that was not possible.

I am rising in his place and I wanted to begin my remarks about Bill C-113 by saying that it is interesting that not every employer in this country applauds the government's position in introducing this legislation. I would like to refer to *The Ottawa Citizen* of Wednesday, January 22, 1992. That is over a year ago.

Matthew Barrett, the chairman and chief executive officer of the Bank of Montreal gave a speech at his firm's annual general meeting. In his speech he said: "There is a dark side to an economy in transition. Building a new economy will be a painful process for many Canadians. Most of that pain will be borne by the thousands of Canadians whose jobs disappear. We now have 1.5 million unemployed. That is a human tragedy of enormous proportions. It brings grief and division to the jobless and their families, and it is unjust. A blameless minority are paying the cost of a restructuring that will ultimately benefit all Canadians".

He went on to say: "We cannot treat the unemployed as the cannon fodder in our economic battles. That would be callous and it would also be wasteful since every unemployed Canadian is an unrealized asset".

What did the government do subsequent to January 1992? It immediately set out to use the unemployed as cannon fodder for the failed Tory and Liberal policies.

• (1640)

A number of people asked me when I was home in my riding whether Bill C-113 is really as bad as I am saying it is. I sat down with them and talked to them about what is in this bill, and we have heard that discussed in this House today.

Anti-poverty groups are saying that Bill C-113 will drive more Canadians below the poverty line, and it is just magic that at the same time the hon. member for Don Valley North, who is the chair of the poverty subcommittee, wants to lower the poverty line in this country.

Bill C-113 further erodes Canadian labour standards, that is from the unions in Canada. Bill C-113 will

increase discrimination, that is from human rights groups in this country. Bill C-113 will allow more employers to get away with sexual harassment, that is from women's groups in this country.

Bill C-113 passes the social programs back to the provinces, that is from provincial governments. Bill C-113 will increase the cost of transporting grain and hurt Canadian farmers, that is from farming groups. Bill C-113 threatens occupational health and safety, that is from a number of health and safety committees. Bill C-113 wipes out free collective bargaining for federal workers, that is from public sector workers in the federal government.

In response to those who have asked me about Bill C-113 I have tried to point out that if there was no danger for Canadian workers in Bill C-113 there would not have been protests across this country. There would not have been 50,000, 40,000, or however many thousand, people on a bitterly cold sub-Arctic day in Montreal demonstrating their disapproval of this legislation to this government.

We got back into the House of Commons and this government withdrew Bill C-105, rewrote it and introduced it as Bill C-113. Aside from some cosmetic changes in the UI section, adding to the just cause list, providing more privacy for victims of sexual abuse and a clause for evidence for fired claimants, the bill is still the same.

Public Service wages are still frozen in total disregard to due process of collective bargaining. Grain transportation costs still go up at a time when most farmers are already struggling. Bill C-113 actually adds in the Atlantic Freight Assistance Act.

UI benefits are still reduced from 60 to 57 per cent of former income. People who are fired for misconduct or who quit without just cause still will be totally cut off from UI benefits.

The bill is overkill on a problem that is more perceived than real. The government has turned the safety net of UI into a drift-net that will gather up thousands of innocent victims of economic policies that have been perpetrated by this government and the Liberal government before it. It will gather them in along with a few abusers. Every Canadian who is required to quit his or her job and every person who is fired becomes the victim of this bill and has to prove to the government that he or she should be eligible for unemployment insurance.