

Government Orders

automobiles, with resulting extensive layoffs of working men and women in my community and communities like it across this country.

The people who will be laid off when the auto industry goes into a downturn will not have any alternatives. It will not do the government any good to say there will be training programs available. There is no guarantee under this bill that there will be additional training programs available in my city of Windsor or any particular city, and no guarantee that people taking any added training programs will have jobs available to them as a result. In fact, in the city of Windsor, if the automobile industry and related industries are in a severe downturn, there simply are not any alternatives. Because of this cruel and heartless bill, when the auto industry enters into the downturn which many fear is very close, there will not be any alternative but food banks or municipal welfare. This will increase the burden on municipalities, provincial governments and the taxpayers who support them, basically all of us in this country. If this measure is in some way linked to the free trade agreement then certainly instead of using it to cut back benefits under the unemployment insurance program and lengthening periods required to be spent before qualifying for unemployment insurance, this bill should have provided what the Prime Minister promised. He promised a generous adjustment program for workers who would be losing their jobs because of the free trade agreement.

Not only does this measure contain nothing of the kind, it cuts back, undermines and takes away the kinds of benefits that we have already and which people will need increasingly as the negative effects of the government's free trade deal with the United States are felt in communities across this country, especially communities with some kind of industrial base.

The government through this bill has not only broken another promise in not providing a generous adjustment program, it has also broken its promise that it would not undermine but would instead strengthen basic social programs. Surely, Mr. Speaker, this is typical of what this government has done, especially since being returned to office last fall. It has brought forward a measure to claw back, to cut the old age pension and family allowance for large numbers of Canadians. This is something that I predict will affect even larger numbers in years to come. It will cut back our basic rail passenger transportation

service in its measures to cut VIA Rail. Now it is bringing forward this measure to seriously undermine our unemployment insurance system.

Lurking on the horizon is the horrendous goods and services tax, that grief and suffering tax, which will make every one of us in this country pay more for just about everything we buy, whether it is manufactured goods or services. Here we see the glimmerings of a less than secret agenda to drastically change this country and to drastically undermine the basic social fabric which has made us proud to be Canadians. Until now, our country has been one where individual initiative has had its place, where the market system has had its place, but also we have had a basic foundation of measures like our unemployment insurance program to make sure that no matter what happens people have the basis for a decent existence for themselves and their families.

• (1630)

As I have said, the secret agenda is becoming more and more evident. The agenda of this Conservative government is one of callousness, heartlessness, it is one of less and less concern for working people in this country.

I call upon all members of this House to defeat this bill when it comes up for final third reading vote in a very few minutes. If this bill is not defeated, if the Conservative majority listens to the demands and orders of its leadership, then there is no doubt in my mind, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Canada will not forget what is being done to them through this secret Conservative agenda which is becoming more and more evident and this Conservative government will be soundly defeated in the next election. But until that time, if this bill passes, then hundreds of thousands of Canadians who will lose their unemployment insurance benefits or have them severely cut back will have to go through a period of totally unnecessary suffering for themselves and their families.

This is wrong, Mr. Speaker, and I call upon this House to defeat this bill.

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member who preceded me for his very impassioned plea that the government listen to this last minute effort to stop this piece of legislation which is going to be