

What makes it really difficult, Mr. Speaker, is if you look at the lengthy labour disputes both in Hamilton and in Sault Ste. Marie as they related to the steel industry, they came at the head of a very difficult recession. The fact is that in our own community of Hamilton, thousands of workers who are ready, willing and able to work are going to spend a very bleak Christmas not being able to work because the jobs simply are not there.

The jobs are not there because of the strike, and I think this is the point of the 85 per cent rule, and why it should be struck down. The jobs are not there because we are in an economic downturn caused by the high interest rate policies of this government.

Having concluded the steel dispute, both in Hamilton and in Algoma, at the same time as the recession hit us right between the eyes right across the country, the workers at Algoma are being hamstrung or strangled effectively by this 85 per cent rule. While in Hamilton they did have a sufficient number of recalls because we raised the issue in the House, it did in fact result in a positive—at least from the perspective of collecting unemployment insurance—result for some of the workers.

The same has not been said for Sault Ste. Marie, and many of those workers will continue through the Christmas season on welfare just like the thousands of other workers who have been cut off as a result of Bill C-21.

I continue to be shocked when the Minister of Employment and Immigration constantly during Question Period in the House points to Bill C-21 as a great reform for Canadian workers.

What it is is a chance for the federal government to get out of the business of unemployment insurance and to hang a lot of workers out to dry. That is why we are seeing the welfare roles across this country swell as a result of the Bill C-21 government legislation.

Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, on the matter of Bill C-21, the hon. member should know that Bill C-21 only came into effect three weeks ago.

Any person who was collecting UI was collecting it on the old rules. She is way out to lunch on that.

Supply

The Bill C-21 changes have not the slightest thing to do with what she is talking about.

She made another comment that I noted here, that \$1.3 billion had been cut from the system. There has not been a penny cut from the system. It has been readjusted within the system. She does not know what she is talking about.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry the member is so out of touch that he has not been in touch with the Burlington welfare office.

If he went home once in a while and found out what the Tridon workers know, he would know that in fact the welfare roles in Burlington, Hamilton and in the area are increasing as a result of the government's decision to cut back on women.

I was in Hamilton just this weekend. I will be there next weekend and the weekend after. I am listening to the workers. The workers at Tridon in Burlington are calling me because they call their member of Parliament, and he hides behind the minister.

Here you have a community in Burlington, his own Tridon employees being told to take a hike, their jobs are being exported to Smyrna in the United States and what does this member of Parliament do? He has the nerve to stand up and defend a government program on unemployment insurance that is going to see thousands of working Canadians, in particular women, part-time workers, the working poor, cut their unemployment insurance as a result of Bill C-21. Those are the facts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of any issue before Parliament that is of greater importance than the issue of poverty, and particularly poverty as it relates to Canada's children. I think those Canadians who find themselves in low income across Canada have a right to expect from their members of Parliament a debate that was meaningful, one that stuck to the facts, and one that simply did not try to obscure the situation with partisan rhetoric.

As a consequence, I know that many Canadians will be disappointed in the presentation that was made by the hon. member for Hamilton East in that in the place of hard facts what she presented was bitter partisan rhetoric, which did not do anything in terms of painting a picture of the problems of poverty in Canada. Nor, as