

community and its representatives, as well as by the lending community. It is an important tool in the government's over-all effort to create an economic environment conducive to small business growth, which includes low and simplified taxes, price stability, low inflation and low interest rates. This bill can be made more dynamic in the months and years ahead.

While my friends opposite may not agree with everything I have said I do believe that they agree that everything possible must be done to help our small business sector lead the recovery. Bill C-76 will help them do that. I urge all party support quickly for this very important bill.

**Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the minister. I know that he has avoided the particular subject of ministers' salaries which I believe is dealt with in this bill. He mentioned the Salaries Act which pertained to his and his colleagues' salaries. I know they are being reduced and I sympathize with the minister because frankly I do not feel that the minister is over paid. For the moment we will let that pass.

Would he not agree that the government could have saved a lot more money than the rather modest decrease in ministers' salaries proposed in this bill if it had chopped the size of the cabinet from the overweening, over sized, and grossly inefficient group of 39 cabinet ministers that we have in office now? It is the largest cabinet in history, and Canadians have been saddled with it and have been paying for it through the nose since 1984.

Would it not have been better, in his view, if the Prime Minister had reduced the cabinet by cutting out the dead wood and reducing it to a smaller number with a little less dead wood?

**An hon. member:** There would be nothing left.

**Mr. Milliken:** My friend is unduly harsh. He said there would be nothing left. That is unfair. There are a few members of the cabinet who are not dead wood.

**Mr. Riis:** Name them.

**Mr. Milliken:** The member for Kamloops wants me to name them, but I would not want to embarrass the others. It is better and safer, as he knows, to refer to a lot of dead wood and let the public and the press decide who they think is dead wood.

### *Government Orders*

Would the hon. minister enlighten us on whether he thinks we could have saved a lot more money by chopping the cabinet instead of proposing this modest reduction in ministers' salaries? Would it not have been better for the Canadian public if we had done that?

**Mr. Hockin:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear from my hon. friend on this subject. I am astonished to hear that he is against the cutting of ministerial pay.

**Mr. Milliken:** I did not say that.

**Mr. Hockin:** He expressed that he did not think this was a particularly good reform. He was very complimentary but he said that we did not save very much money with it. However it is important symbolically. When we are asking Canadians to tighten their belts, it is important that ministers do so as well.

His next question about the size of cabinet was a more interesting one. Let me say that I think he is taking the position of Preston Manning who said last week that all ministers of state represent nothing but narrow specialized interests and all must go.

I do not believe that small business is a narrow specialized interest. I do not believe that small business which creates over 80 per cent of all the new jobs in Canada is a narrow specialized interest. I do not agree with Preston Manning.

Small business is the engine that will take us out of the restraints of the present economy. Small business needs support, and that is what this bill is for.

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops):** Mr. Speaker, I want to add that indeed small business is driving the recovery. We should do everything we can to support that sector.

I listened to the hon. minister's speech carefully. The other day a group of students from Cariboo College approached me regarding the six-month grace period that is now being removed. Needless to say it is a real struggle for students coming out of colleges, universities and so on. Their ability to repay their loans is being further challenged by the economic downturn.

The question put to me was the following one: Why would the government be making life more difficult for students entering the work force at this critical point when it has agreed to spend over \$4 billion on attack helicopters? A lot of these students did not see this as necessarily a priority. Important, yes, but is it more of a