

Government Orders

single promise it made on this particular sensitive issue has been broken.

Just two weeks ago we spoke in the House, the hon. member for Restigouche—Chaleur and others, on ways that we could be more sensitive, or at least the government could be more sensitive, in recognizing those people who had to serve on juries to have their claims honoured. I still do not understand why the government will not go along with that.

I am concerned about a very sensitive issue in the sense of promises that have been made by the Minister of Finance who, when he introduced his budget, said they would look after any further deficits in the unemployment insurance fund.

In the relatively short time that the hon. member and I have been in politics, the employee cost has gone from \$1.95 to \$3. That is a 60 per cent increase. It does not sound like very much when you say it, \$1.95 to \$3, but that is for every \$100 of earnings.

For the employer who pays roughly 40 per cent more, it has gone from \$2.73 to \$4.20. The government is not paying anything. It used to pay 31 per cent. It does not pay that any more.

I would like to ask the hon. member if he is getting any flack in his riding on this broken promise of not to increase the fees and not to change it—indeed before the last election nothing would change in unemployment insurance—how it is affecting his constituents and what he is telling them that the government might want to do next.

Mr. Mills: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. This government through its crazy tax designs has basically broken the morale of entrepreneurship in this country. In the process of doing that it has basically caused an unemployment rate that is scary in this country today.

What we have is a situation right now where those who are unemployed do not see any hope and even those who are employed are nervous that tomorrow or next week their jobs could be in jeopardy.

What is doubly crippling about this whole phenomenon is that the government continues through a litany of small taxes like this unemployment insurance tax to load up the few businesses that are left fighting to stay alive, fighting to get through the worst recession probably in the history of this country.

I just cannot understand where the government is coming from. I have said it in this House before. I would rather have an extra two, three or four billion dollars on the deficit and have those 1.5 million people working than have a \$30-odd billion deficit and have almost 2 million people not working, not paying tax, who have to be supported by the few that are working.

I think this government's system and attitude toward the UI fund, the UI premiums is once against short-sighted. It says it listens to the experts who are telling it they are on track. I come from the same area as the minister of privatization and I cannot find any of these experts who say the government is on track. I cannot find any experts even from Midland, or Penetang, who are saying that this government is on track.

I think this is just another example where the government has basically thrown this line out that it maybe met someone in some sort of casual meeting and maybe somebody casually said it was on track. It is not listening to a majority of Canadians.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, the colleague who has just spoken, the member for Broadview—Greenwood, mentioned unemployment in the context of the debt and the deficit. I wonder if he has given any consideration and might have any comments on the extent to which reducing unemployment, in fact investing in getting people back to work, would actually assist with reduction of the debt and deficit.

It seems to me that with the large number of people not working, not earning income, therefore, not paying taxes and in fact receiving either unemployment insurance, welfare payments or other assistance they need to get through this, in fact every person in Canada who is not working is contributing directly to the debt or the deficit, that one of the quickest ways to get rid of the deficit is to have that 10 per cent of Canadians out there working, earning income, creating jobs for other Canadians with the goods and services they are purchasing and paying taxes rather than being in the unenviable position of relying on others for support.

Mr. Mills: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Ottawa West is so accurate when she focuses on the fact that full unemployment is obviously going to make a massive difference in the UI draw on this government Treasury. The forecast this year is somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$16 billion, \$17 billion or \$18 billion.