

*Government Orders*

Where did Ms. Riche, executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress, and Mr. Hayes, senior economist in the same organisation, get their figures? On what official data did they rely to say such a thing publicly in front of a legislative committee of the House? Here is the answer of Ms. Riche and her colleague, Mr. Hayes, and I quote him: "The figures we got initially were over the phone". These people testified on the basis of telephone calls, just like that. This was not very professional and it was one more example of the kind of disinformation they used on the Canadian public. It is shameful.

What about the evidence we heard from Mrs. Suzan Giampietri, vice-president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and her colleague, Mr. Cres Pascucci, national president of the Canada Employment and Immigration Union, who said assessments made by departmental employees, who happen to be members of their own unions, were more like guesstimates, hence questioning the professionalism of their members who work for that department and prepared the administrative data officially provided to all members of the committee.

Those who questioned the work done and the data provided showed a total lack of respect for the employees of Employment and Immigration Canada. Another fine example of how to knowingly misinform the public.

I have many more examples describing the disinformation campaign aimed at the Canadian population and orchestrated by several union leaders for political purposes, obviously in collusion with members from the NDP, the Liberal Party and the Bloc Quebecois.

Not surprisingly, things got very tense at times and the people responsible for that situation should be ashamed of what they did with full knowledge of the facts.

What exactly is Bill C-113? In reality it is an act to provide for government expenditure restraint following the economic statement made by the Minister of Finance on December 2. This legislation has become necessary in order to restrain the country's deficit and control the deficit in the unemployment insurance fund which is threatening our UI system.

Under this bill, salaries of public servants, members of Parliament, cabinet ministers, judges, the Prime Minister, senators and the Governor General will be frozen for two years; in fact salaries of members of Parliament will be frozen not for two, but for three years. Also, unemployment insurance benefits will be frozen for two years because of a decrease in the UI benefit rate from 60 percent to 57 percent. And I do mean for two years, because opponents and the opposition regularly forget to mention it.

• (1555)

In addition, the bill provides that from now on, anyone who quits a job without just cause or reason, as well as anyone who is dismissed for misconduct, will not be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

It is unacceptable for all workers in Canada who contribute to the UI fund to pay for the decision freely taken by an individual to leave his or her job without valid reason or provocation. It is a matter of fairness.

Just because we pay fire or accident insurance premiums does not mean that we will automatically collect if we are responsible for the fire. It must be the same for unemployment insurance, which is and must remain a safety net so that those who lose their jobs can receive support until they find other work.

It is important to mention that there was another way to limit the deficit in the UI fund, namely to increase the premiums of all workers and all employers in Canada by 10 per cent, 20 per cent, 30 per cent or 40 per cent. The government rejected this option knowing that it would adversely affect the economic recovery. A 20-cent increase in UI premiums would cost 30,000 people their jobs in 1993 and 60,000 in 1994. We cannot afford to endanger a recovery that is already well under way.

The bill also increases the number of valid reasons for leaving a job from 5 to 13 and recognizes over 40 situations in which a person can quit and still be eligible for UI benefits.

It is to be expected that the opposition would try to downplay this given their highly partisan objectives. Nevertheless, these reasons for quitting are in the legislation. There is no getting around them and they are a further guarantee for future claimants.