

Government Orders

insurance. You cannot just say: "It is my vested right. I paid into it, therefore I should draw it out".

My question for my hon. friend is: Does he know what insurance is?

Mr. Samson: Madam Speaker, it is a buffer during a time of need. If you lose your house, you collect on your insurance and that is why you pay it. You lose your job, you get insurance. If you leave your job because there are conditions you believe you cannot cope with, then you get insurance that you have paid into. It is plain and simple.

This government is trying to intimidate people into staying in conditions that are intolerable, that they cannot get out of any other way. Then they have to prove it. They have to disrobe themselves in front of all kinds of witnesses to prove their case. These guys are sick.

Hon. Mary Collins (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Environment) and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate on Bill C-113, the government expenditure restraint bill.

It has been interesting listening to the discussion about the bill. There has certainly been a lot of heat from the last two speakers but not a lot of light. I would like to have the opportunity of discussing some of the real elements involved in this bill.

As the Minister of Finance has already stated this morning, the major purpose of this bill of course is to bring government expenditures into line. It has to do some of the tough things. None of them are easy and in the best of all possible worlds we would not have to do these things but we have to. We are facing a financial situation in this country and we have to start at home. We all have to contribute to this exercise. Indeed, as members of Parliament and cabinet ministers we are contributing in that we are freezing our own salaries. There are many other measures throughout this bill and in all departments of government so that we can bring about those \$8 billion of savings which will result from this bill over the next three years.

• (1200)

As the Minister of Finance has indicated there are some good signs developing in terms of the economy. Being from western Canada I know we can certainly see those developing in British Columbia.

That does not mean we do not have to continue to be persistent and consistent in getting our own expenditures under control. Whether it is within departments where we are reducing our operating expenses or whether it is in terms of grants that we give out and reducing those, we all have to recognize that we have to make these changes.

However, I too wanted to talk about one particular aspect of this bill that has caused a lot of discussion and generated a lot of debate over the last couple of weeks. That has to do with the provisions relating to the changes in unemployment insurance.

I thought this morning listening to the debate that there really are some very different views about what the unemployment insurance fund is all about. Some people seem to think it is there to boost the economy. That was never my understanding of what it was brought in for. Others seem to think it is an entitlement. No matter what happens to you, you paid into it and you get a chance to get your money out.

I say with respect to my hon. colleagues that was never the intention of the unemployment insurance fund as it was developed nor indeed is it the intention in most cases for insurance. Generally speaking, for insurance you pay a premium and then if basically through no fault of your own circumstances should occur and a catastrophe happens with respect to your house or your car or your life you will get whatever the arrangements are for the payment.

The same thing is true for unemployment insurance. You pay premiums and if circumstances should come about through no fault of your own that you lose your job, then indeed you have the opportunity of being able to collect under the terms and conditions of the Unemployment Insurance Act. It is not something that is automatic and never has been.

I would like to turn now to another part of this discussion. It deals with the aspect of sexual harassment. Over the past couple of weeks there has been a great deal said in the media and in this House that these provisions we are bringing in with respect to unemployment insurance will somehow have an adverse impact on