

*Government Orders*

the Minister of Finance is here this evening to listen to my speech. I find that he has a lot of patience and I would like him to pay some attention to the comments I will make.

Like everyone else, I know very well that this budget is his Christmas card to Canadians. A few days before Christmas, he is saying to all Canadians: Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas to all. Merry Christmas and *Joyeux Noël* to the public servants and Merry Christmas to Canada's unemployed. Again he attacks public servants.

Two years ago public servants went on strike, the first big strike of public servants. It was a disaster for service to Canadians and a disaster for public servants themselves who pleaded with the government for fair treatment. Later, the federal government passed the new Public Service Act, Bill C-26, where it turned management of the public service inside out. In November it cut 2 per cent from the public service budget, resulting in cuts in service to the public.

I find it quite wrong for an employer to mistreat its own employees constantly. Without saying so, it is also mistreating all Canadians, because public servants are there to help the general public. Public servants check to see whether food is spoiled or not. They control airport traffic. They inspect health products, pharmaceuticals, the transportation industry and just about every imaginable industry in Canada in order to protect us. They enforce the laws that protect the general public and they are being treated badly. Ironically, many public servants collect taxes. I find it quite ridiculous for the government to show such contempt for its employees. They were told a year ago that they would have no salary increase for one year and 3 per cent for each of the next two years. Now the Minister of Finance has changed his mind; it is no longer 0-3-3 but 0-0-0. That is his way of wishing his own employees merry Christmas a few days before the holidays. Merry Christmas to those who are there to help the general public, to help the unemployed, to those who look after immigration and customs. That is unfair.

Another big injustice is that instead of attacking unemployment, the government is attacking the unemployed. We know that the Unemployment Insurance Act was amended last year. Before, there was a partnership.

The Government of Canada contributed a third and employees and employers each contributed a third. The government managed to unload its contribution of one third and put all the responsibility for unemployment insurance premiums on employees and employers. It said that was the right way to go. All of a sudden we see in the budget that the minister is cutting benefits for the newly unemployed from 60 to 57 per cent. The unemployed should be given a hand, not a kick. At present there are 1.5 million unemployed Canadians who receive unemployment benefits. We often forget to say that another 2.3 million Canadians are on welfare. This means that 3.8 million adults are out of work. Not to mention the low wage earners, those who do have a job but are paid peanuts. All they can get are short term minimum wage jobs. You find mostly women in those jobs. More often than not these single parents who have to provide for a family with their menial jobs are the ones hardest hit. Jobs must be created because jobs are the mainspring of the economy, our livelihood. Let us not repeat the mistake the government made in 1988-89 with the free trade agreement.

• (2120)

[English]

The free trade agreement was supposed to create jobs. It did not create jobs. It was supposed to help us in exporting our goods. It did not help us in exporting goods. Instead of exporting goods, it has been exporting jobs.

We are supposed to be helping small business. The government says that it is going to encourage the banks to raise the ceiling from \$100,000 to \$250,000 on loans for small businesses. If you are an MP, owners of small businesses are coming to your office constantly to see you. As we all know there are in Canada 932,396 small businesses and they create 80 per cent of the jobs.

Eighty-one per cent of these small businesses have less than 50 employees. They are the organizations that create jobs. These same people will tell MPs that they cannot get loans. The banks are nervous. These same people cannot borrow on their investment. They cannot borrow on the investment of their business. They have to put up their own personal home for loans. That is a catastrophe.