

Government Orders

• (1820)

Today, of course, we reminded ourselves of the changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act. The government thought that it was time that we took off hundreds of thousands of people off the unemployment insurance rolls. We should make it a lot more difficult for people to qualify so that people who live in Newfoundland would have a more difficult time qualifying and that we should take money from the unemployed, the people who need the money the most, to provide money for retraining. When hundreds of thousands of people are taken from the unemployment insurance support program in this country, what kind of signal does that send to people in the have not areas of Canada where regional development programs have been cut back?

My hon. friend from Prince George—Bulkley Valley for months and months has been asking the Minister of Forestry where are those forestry agreements. We know what we require to sustain one of the most important natural resources in this country. We need something like \$1 billion over the next number of years to develop reforestation and silviculture to ensure that that resource stays in place for future generations. There is tremendous opportunity in employment.

Even setting aside the tens of thousands of jobs that could be generated, the fact is that we cannot keep cutting down trees and not replanting them, considering that our forest exports are our number one export commodity by far. Does this government look ahead and say that it is time that we invested in this critical resource. It is time that we provided for silviculture programs and reforestation and provided employment for literally tens of thousands of people. No, we must cut back.

I was going to talk about the small business sector because the Minister of State for Small Business was in the House a minute ago. We recognize that about 96 per cent of the new jobs in Canada will be created by the small business sector. What is it that we are doing to assist and encourage the small business sector? What

programs are in place to encourage and support small business in Canada? Have there been any new initiatives? No, there have not. Have there been any old initiatives? No, there are not. Only the GST is going to make it a logistical paperwork nightmare. My hon. friend says it is going to make small business persons bureaucrats and tax collectors. They are being asked to be federal government tax collectors now with no compensation whatsoever.

My hon. friend from Alberta talks a lot about the debt. When the Conservatives came into office in 1984 the national debt was \$160 billion. One gets the impression that the Conservatives were actually worried about that and took steps to reduce it. Today the debt is \$351.6 billion. That is virtually a doubling of the debt in their short period in office. This idea of blaming something that happened in this country years ago sounds like a worn-out record. People do not believe that the reason that the Conservatives have doubled the debt is because of the Liberals. Granted, there was a point there because of the corporate loopholes that the Liberal government brought in, particularly Mr. Turner. It was possible for Brascan, Confederation Life, Xerox of Canada, and Power Corporation to pay no income tax last year. In fact, I could list 69,000 corporations. Why is it that my Conservative friends opposite do not explain why they feel to have 69,000 profitable corporations paying no tax at all is a good idea. I never hear them explaining that.

In conclusion, the government is stating that we must reduce the debt and the deficit, that we must impose a goods and services tax on the people of Canada, and yet keep in place a tax system so that Brascan, Confederation Life and Xerox Canada, just those three, with profits in excess of \$400 million paid no income tax whatsoever. Does that not put it into perspective. This government says one thing to its corporate privileged friends and for the rest of Canada acts in a very big brother way and says: "We know what is best for you. In the end you will understand that increasing taxes like the goods and services tax so that each Canadian family will pay probably \$2,000 more taxes next year is a good idea". No wonder that the people of Canada have become so