

The bill before the House today, like the other bills sponsored by the same member, including C-249, tabled in February 1987, would extend the protection granted to unpaid wages to contributions paid or deemed to have been paid into a pension fund. Although the concept as such is indeed praiseworthy, the financial impact of such a provision might well prove to be extremely severe, and would probably lead to even greater credit restrictions, especially in economic sectors that are highly labour intensive.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the mechanisms we choose to protect employees in case of employer bankruptcy must not affect the ability of Canadian businesses to compete on international markets. In fact, with the present globalization of markets, it is imperative that protection mechanisms do not, as might well happen with the super priority which is the focus of Bill C-217, impede business financing and as a result impair the efficiency and competitive potential of our businesses. If businesses cannot develop as they should—and they are the motor of our economy—the result is fewer jobs, which means that in the end employees are the ones who suffer.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, these were the reasons why Bill C-217 cannot be supported by this government as well as the main points of the bill the government intends to table early next year.

[*English*]

**Mr. Greg Thompson (Carleton—Charlotte):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on Private Member's C-217.

Going back and looking at from where the bill comes, the member proposing it and the party he represents, I think we have an understanding of what he is attempting to do. We do not disagree with that. The difficulty obviously is that they do not understand the complexity of legislation and the net effect it will have on our business community.

None of us will disagree with what he is telling us and what he is proposing should be done, but it is much more complex than that. The member for Nickel Belt mentioned in his speech an elephant gestation period of nine years. In response to that, they have been around here

for about 40 years and have yet to conceive. If they hang around long enough possibly they will deliver, but at this point I do not think we are going to have to worry about it. There is no question they have not taken the time to read thoroughly what they are suggesting. If they did so, they would change some of what they are saying.

One of the problems obviously when a firm goes bankrupt is the little people, the people who carry lunch boxes, the ordinary worker. All of us want to see those people protected. However, in a much broader and much bigger picture, obviously we need factories and places of business for those people to enter to work. We all want them to get paid, but what they are proposing goes beyond that. They are taking a look at super priority for workers; in other words, being at the head of the bus, as the member for Nickel Belt pointed out, in terms of getting their wages.

We do not disagree with that. However, what that is going to do is throw a few other elements into the equation which they have not considered, one of them being the fact that trustees have to be appointed. At some point trustees have to receive payment for their services to ensure that the business is liquidated and that other creditors are paid, including the workers. If there is no trustee there to do the job, no one gets paid. Members of the NDP have not considered that.

The other thing they have thrown at us is the fact that there should be an onus, a responsibility on the backs of the banks to make sure that employees are paid. I guess none of us would disagree with that either, but the difficulty obviously is if that is the way it is done in every business that goes bankrupt, investment in that business will be stifled from day one. Obviously banking institutions and others will take a hard look at where they want to put their dollars if they believe that they are going to be the last to be paid.

The secret to the whole thing is a healthy economy, and that is what we have had for the last six years. We have been number one or number two in the world for the last six years.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** Order, please. It being two o'clock p.m., the House will now proceed to Statements by Members, pursuant to Standing Order 31.