

*Government Orders*

program, as we well know, was for some time being fingered by our U.S. counterparts as a potentially unfair trade practice, when looked at in those terms. By removing itself from the funding level, I believe this government is hoping to remove the threat of counter-vail under the reality of the free trade agreement.

Let there be no mistake. These changes are a harmonization of Canada's unemployment insurance program in a post free trade reality, a complete capitulation of what is a very important social service program in order to harmonize it with a less structured program in the United States. Let us call a spade a spade.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Blackburn:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer my colleague by giving him some figures.

Depending on the various state formulas used in the United States, benefits are about 50 per cent of earnings. The basic minimum weekly benefit is between \$5 and \$62, while maximum weekly benefits range from \$95 to \$330.

I am told that in half the United States, it is \$70 or more, which is the average, while here in Canada, Mr. Speaker, benefits are 60 per cent of insurable earnings and the weekly maximum is \$318.

I think these figures show my colleague quite clearly that there is no parallel between the two. If he wants to take the United States as an example, he will realize that they are quite a bit worse off than in Canada. Furthermore, our system provides social benefits that they do not have in the United States.

[*English*]

**Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso)** Mr. Speaker, I want to say in addressing this question of the legislation, Bill C-21, that there is an air of fatigue and resignation in this House as we consider third reading of this bill. I suggest that the resignation mirrors, to some extent, the resignation of the people of Canada as they confront the harsh realities of this government.

In Atlantic Canada where I come from there is a feeling that we have been the victims of a saturation bombing by the government on programs that we had a right to expect would continue. For example, recently VIA Rail has been dismantled in Atlantic Canada and in other parts of Canada. We have witnessed a complete

retreat on regional development programs. We are now seeing a crisis in the Atlantic fishery with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans denying that it exists in flagrant violation of the fact that very shortly there may be major lay-offs in the fishery.

The government now introduces this bill, this regressive piece of legislation, and does not listen to Canadians. It did not listen to Canadians when we travelled across the country in September with this committee. It was clear that despite the fact that 157 of the 202 briefs condemned the legislation, asked that it be withdrawn, the government reacted by saying: "We are going forward. There is no reason for us to listen to this testimony. We have heard it before, and we are not listening to it".

There was a sense that the government does not care what Canadians think about Bill C-21, about the increases in the taxes to which we have been subjected, culminating in this dramatic goods and services tax. There is a feeling among Canadians that the government does not listen. Not only did it not listen to the committee, or to this House or to Canadians, we have recently found that it does not listen to the courts either.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon the unemployment action group held a press conference to set the record straight on something the Department of Employment and Immigration had denied regarding the implementation of a Federal Court of Appeal decision on vacation pay and severance pay.

Two weeks ago, on October 11, my hon. colleague, the Member for Eglinton—Lawrence, asked the Minister of Employment and Immigration Minister of State if her Department would implement the Federal Court of Appeal ruling concerning vacation pay and severance pay. She said: "Yes, we will implement it. We disagreed at first but now that we know how to interpret the ruling, we will implement it." That decision affects \$100 million in benefits. We found out today that the Department has not implemented the ruling and is now introducing regulations to circumvent it. That is how this government works. She denies everything and refuses to listen to Canadians, the courts and the other members of the Committee. How can we