

Oral Questions

the qualification period for unemployment insurance for 10 weeks into 1990 in those areas of the country where there is high unemployment.

This bill, S-12, is virtually the same as the Conservative government's bill which it introduced and passed in 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988. The Official Opposition is ready to give unanimous consent to pass this bill today without any debate.

Earlier this week the Prime Minister said that he did not want to hurt the unemployed in the high unemployment regions of this country. Will he agree to pass this bill today without any debate, immediately, and we will give our co-operation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is the hon. member and his colleagues in the other place who are hurting the people who are unemployed in this country. It is not 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 or 1988. It is 1989. It is time to make some changes in this country. It is going to be better for workers across Canada in the future. It is going to give them jobs for the 1990s. It will do away with the repeater provisions for seasonal workers. It is going to help women with maternity benefits and sickness benefits at the same time.

If the hon. member would take his head out of the sand, we could get somewhere on this.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, the government knows that Bill C-21 is not the answer. Bill C-21 cuts \$1.3 billion from the unemployment insurance benefits. Bill C-21 terminates the government's contribution to the unemployment insurance fund which last year was \$2.8 billion. Bill C-21 is not the answer to the unemployed. Over 200 witnesses—

Mr. Speaker: Given the time, I ask the member to put his question.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, over 200 witnesses want to be heard on this bill in the Senate.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Allmand: My question is the following: If the government is sincere in not wanting to hurt the unemployed, will it not agree to pass Bill C-12 today? We will give it our full co-operation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is saying that Bill C-21 which was very thoughtfully put together by this government and very thoughtfully developed as a policy for the 1980s—

Mr. Wappell: We are going into the 1990s.

Mrs. McDougall: It had hearings across the country and heard 200 interventions in four weeks. What the hon. member is now saying is that that which solves the problem is not good for them. It is their fault that the people are going to have 14 weeks instead of 10 weeks.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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PROPOSED GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mrs. Diane Marleau (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, on December 11 the Minister of Finance stated: "I think I understand the tax". He may understand how the tax is constructed, but he does not understand how Canadians will be penalized by it.

The minister has been convinced by his own propaganda. All Canadians will pay more. They will pay a tax on distance and on transportation costs. They will even pay a tax on heating costs.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Ms. Marleau: Absolutely nothing in the proposed changes addresses the regional impact of the GST. Why has the minister once again ignored the needs of Canadians? Why has the minister again ignored the needs of the regions of this country?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am not ignoring the needs of the regions of this country. That is one of the key benefits of the goods and services tax. Over-all, the regions of the country are the major beneficiaries.

If she looks at the economic data that is in the technical paper she will see that in those regions of the country where they have resource development, major capital intensive industries or industries that are export-oriented, similar to the industries in her home town, they