

In short, they had misled every single witness who had come into our committee, every single witness. They had misled members on the committee.

Second, upon further questioning we found out that there was no holiday for anybody. There was no freebie here. They were going to lend the money to the fund. That is all they were going to do: lend the money to the fund. At some point in the future they were going to get future employers to pay back the money for the first two years of the fund.

It was the height of hypocrisy, a sleight of hand, and dare I say, a deceit to come forward at that point in time. They destroyed the discord of the committee. We argued the point that what the government was doing was wrong. It flew in the face of the rules and regulations and precedents of this place.

Lo and behold, another miracle happened at that committee. The New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party argued that the government's amendment was out of order. I will never forget that day either. We were right, and the chairman of the committee came back and said: "I checked with the clerk and the opposition is right. You can't do this". Then the Tories did not know what to do. Do members remember that? The Tories did not know what to do. They were going to kick the chairman off the committee because he had not done what they wanted him to do.

So much for harmony, so much for co-operation, and so much for doing it the right way.

What happened then is that the government did not know what to do with the bill. That was in early December. It did not call the committee back and the bill basically got stuck in neutral. The government then ran around the Parliament Buildings trying to figure out what in the name of goodness to do next. At the same time, every day the bill was not put back into the House and every day that the government did not know what to do with the bill hundreds of Canadians were going bankrupt.

We went to the minister on a number of occasions and said: "We realize that the Minister of Finance will not give you the money to fund this fund". We put at least four different proposals as to how they could fund this particular program privately to the minister and his officials, and each and every time it was met with no response.

Government Orders

Finally, a bill was brought back to the House of Commons, stripped of the entire wage earner protection program.

My hon. colleague from Nickel Belt had spent a considerable amount of time with me and the minister and members of the Conservative caucus trying to be innovative. We said the bill indicated in its title that the government recognized there was a right that wage-earners had in this and therefore how could it possibly split that part of the bill? It is done and history will judge these people opposite for doing that.

We fully support most of the aspects of the bill dealing with reorganization. We support the ability of suppliers under this act to be able to revindicate or take back their goods. I must give the minister some credit because that must have been a tough one to get by some of the lobbyists from the banks because it affects their secured position. The minister stood tough and we all win on that one.

There are some other provisions of the bill, just introduced recently in amendments, for farmers and fishermen which recognize that they are a little different. The minister and the government agreed with members of the committee from all sides and included special protection for farmers and fishermen. The Cattlemen's Association did not get everything it wanted but I guess half a loaf is better than none on this particular count.

Things have changed. This bill goes a long way in taking an outdated Bankruptcy Act, because that is all it is now it is not a wage earner protection act anymore, and rebalancing it to a great extent. It takes away the right of the big financial institutions to walk in and almost unilaterally pull the rug out from under businesses that might be experiencing some cash flow problems. Businesses are not always solvent, sometimes they are insolvent but that does not mean they are not good businesses. It may be because of fluctuation in the market, it may be because of problems with cash flow, it could be for a whole number of reasons. However, all too often the banks could quickly appoint a receiver, pull the rug out from under the business, and the business would go belly up.

They cannot do that any more, they are going to have to give notice, I think it is 10 days, before they appoint a receiver. The individual or the corporation now, rather than saying that they cannot do anything unless they find the money to pay everybody off, are going to be able to file for protection and are going to be able, just as in the United States, to put a proposal together to reorganize