

Government Orders

small businesses that are barely hanging on by their teeth.

Now it is saying to those same people who have seen their contributions to the unemployment insurance scheme increased dramatically along with decreased access and decreased benefits: "We are going to cut you off even further". It is a cruel and inhumane way to deal with Canadians in this harsh winter of 1993.

I want to go to the other part of the bill that deals with the freeze on Public Service wages. I want to remind the House that by the time this bill has run its course, for three out of four years, the quarter of a million people who work for the people of Canada will have had no salary increase.

That is on top of a decade of declining real income for the Public Service of Canada. This is a pattern where federal Public Service employees have consistently taken less than the rate of inflation, less than the private sector and less than the rest of the public sector in wage increases. They therefore have seen their real income decline dramatically.

What is the reward for trying to be part of the solution in this country? It is another two years of no salary increase. It is fine for the member for Terrebonne to get up and talk about how members of Parliament are not getting an increase and how judges are not getting an increase. We do not need all of our salary to pay for the essentials of life.

Let me tell you about some of the people who work for the Public Service of Canada because that is where this government made its big mistake. It forced its largest union in the Public Service into a strike two years ago.

That let Canadians see that we have a lot of people working for them and earning very little money. We have people working for the Government of Canada and the people of Canada risking their lives as rescue workers as part of crews on ships for less than \$20,000 a year.

We have over one-quarter of the Public Service of Canada earning less than \$30,000 a year at a time when the National Council on Welfare says the poverty line for a family of four is more than \$30,000.

I suspect that if this legislation were challenged before the Human Rights Commission it would be struck down as contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms

because close to 70 per cent of the people earning less than \$30,000 while working for the Government of Canada are women.

A bill that freezes wages and gives nothing to those at the lowest level who are already spending every cent of their salaries on the necessities of life puts people further into poverty. It hits those in the lowest income brackets the hardest.

• (1715)

The history of this government has been to hit hardest those who have the least. When we impose increases in the unemployment insurance scheme they only apply to salaries under a certain limit. When we impose increases in Canada Pension Plan contributions they only apply to salaries under a certain limit. Those earning more than that and who are already better off do not have to pay that extra penalty.

After three years of zero increase at a time when the federal government is also downsizing we are forcing people into permanent retirement for which they have worked and saved that is going to be more difficult than it needs to be. With retirement incomes based on the last six years of employment and earnings we are saying to people that for four out of those six years they are going to have an average of less than a 1.5 per cent increase. Their pensions for the rest of their retirement will be reduced by that amount.

Is that fair when the government says we are getting rid of tens of thousands of Public Service employees and forcing them onto pensions, unemployment insurance or the welfare rolls? We are forcing them onto pensions before they are ready to retire and we are also going to penalize them a second time by making sure their pension is calculated on wages that have been frozen for three years.

This government was criticized by the Public Service Staff Relations Board for bad faith bargaining when it did this two years ago. It was condemned by conciliation board reports at that time for bargaining in bad faith. Barely two months ago the International Labour Organization, a member body of the United Nations composed of employers, employees and government representatives chastised the Government of Canada for its failure to bargain with its employees.