

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Breitkreuz (Yellowhead):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his observations.

It has to be a concern because even the projection down the road is that the CBC does not have the capacity to balance its budget. To lend it more money exacerbates the problem and certainly does nothing to resolve it.

This country's private network runs pretty close to the taxpayer subsidized CBC. They both have newscasts, long newscasts. Both have public affairs programs. They both have Canadian content and all kinds of other content. There is not too much difference in how they are run, except one is on the backs of the taxpayers and the other is on the free enterprise system.

**Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair):** Mr. Speaker, before my main comments, I would like to say to the absent hon. member for Yellowhead and members of his caucus that none of them were in Windsor, Ontario in December 1990 when our CBC station went dark and 10,000 people went out onto the streets to protest this action by the CBC.

● (1345)

The CBC is the only cultural instrument in Canada with the capability to unify us and to inform people from the great city of Windsor in southwestern Ontario, the greatest city in the southwest, about people from for instance Yellowhead, a place that I am sure many people had never heard of. Certainly I was not aware of it until I came to the House.

In December 1990, 10,000 people streamed out on to the banks of the Detroit River and looked at a most incredible skyline, a skyline that imposed itself on us every day and reminded us of the American presence, a skyline that clearly reminded us that our specifically Canadian culture in Windsor was always in danger of being overshadowed by that tremendous country right there where we can almost touch it.

That country is so close we can go there for lunch and still make it back in an hour. With that country standing there with all its cultural instruments ready to bring to bear upon us and with people in the House starting to talk about doing things that would devastate the CBC, the single greatest unifying cultural instrument in this country, I say there is something wrong.

If members of the party opposite had been elected in Windsor and were talking in the House on behalf of the constituents of Windsor, they would have to go against their party line. The people of Windsor, Ontario, the people of southwestern Ontario in general, do not want to see the wings of the CBC clipped any more. They do not want to see any further erosion of our cultural institutions.

I remind members of the House that there is a hidden agenda over there. That hidden agenda, in my view and in the view of many people on this side of the House, is that members opposite want to rid this country, by arguing the bottom line, of our wonderful cultural institutions, our arts, our great writers and things like CBC radio and television that unify us and make us different from the people over the river, as we say in Windsor.

I am not here to talk about that today; I just felt the urge. I am actually here to talk about changes to the unemployment insurance scheme announced in the February 22, 1994 budget, specifically in contrast to unemployment insurance changes that were brought in under the previous government. I do not need to tell any of us here that the government's first priority is to get Canadians back to work. Changes to the unemployment insurance program are but one of our urgent pledges to create jobs.

As a result of the unemployment insurance measures introduced under Bill C-17, the 1995 unemployment insurance premium rate will be lowered by 30 cents. This is 30 cents lower than would have been the case without these changes. In 1996 the budget measures I am talking about will mean premium relief of at least 25 cents.

In comparison, when the last major changes to the unemployment insurance program under Bill C-21 were put in place in 1990, the unemployment insurance premium rate had just been increased by 30 cents. That was not the last premium rate increase. Since 1989 premium payments by both employers and workers have doubled. For example, the maximum amount of employee contributions increased from \$614 a year to \$1,245. The maximum amount of employer contributions increased from \$859 a year to over \$1,700.

The measures introduced in the budget were necessary to reverse the trend of continually escalating premium costs for both employers and workers. The premium rollback means that there will be 40,000 more jobs in the economy than would have existed if the premium had been allowed to rise, that is 40,000 more Canadians contributing to the prosperity of our country and, incidentally, paying taxes.

● (1350)

In terms of premium payers the rollback means an employer with 100 employees will see a reduction in payroll taxes of up to \$30,000 over the next two years. Over the same period employees will benefit by saving up to \$235. Since the reduction in payroll taxes will result in a lower cost to employers to employ people, it will have the added benefit of lowering Canadian production costs, encouraging exports and making domestic products more competitive.