

Government Orders

When this piece of legislation came forward I was trying to figure out where it was coming from.

• (1530)

When I returned to my constituency office, about one week or so after the first session that we had on this bill and after parts of it were introduced during the economic statement, the people that supported this bill in my community were the people who seemed to be doing okay in terms of their own jobs. For starters, I must say there were very few. They would say: "The government is really doing a good job of cleaning up the abuse".

I reflected for a while and I said that now we know the genesis of where this bill is coming from. This bill was designed to try to send a signal to Canadians that in the name of efficiency the government was going to clean up the Unemployment Insurance Act.

It is a cruel piece of legislation when we have an economy in which 1.6 million people are on the unemployment insurance rolls. The latest Statistics Canada numbers show us that 2.2 million people are on the welfare rolls in this country. This piece of legislation does nothing for the people who are out of work.

It does absolutely nothing for the dignity of people who are in tenuous situations in companies. We have already discussed at length the situations that can exist in companies in terms of harassment being a cause for someone to want to leave, and we have discussed how they are not protected under this bill as clearly as they should be.

This bill was packaged, created and put here to appeal to the right wing in this country. Everything now is done in the name of deficit and debt reduction. Those who are most disadvantaged in our community seem to be on the short end of the stick.

The government has missed the whole point of why it is here. Governments are not here for the advantaged. It is not here just to develop policy for the advantaged. Governments exist to design and develop policy for those in our community who are disadvantaged. When a bill like this comes through the House it violates the whole

first premise of why we are in government. It does not meet the test of looking after those who are disadvantaged.

I stand here today in total opposition to this bill. We in the Liberal Party are not against cleaning up any abuse in the system. We do not tolerate people who are trying to take advantage of the system.

There are ways of ferreting out those who take advantage of the system. Instead of spending all of this time trying to focus on the abuse factor, which the government has said costs somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$200 million out of the close to \$35 billion that was paid out last year in unemployment insurance and welfare, and taking all this time to restructure the Unemployment Insurance Act so dramatically in the name of that \$200 million, this government should be creating hope and designing policies that will spark or ignite small business people in this country so that they can put people back to work.

With the exception of the Small Businesses Loans Act, this government has done very little to stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit in this country, and that is where our greatest hope for new job creation lies.

• (1535)

When I go door to door in my riding people tell me the number one priority of any government in this country right now is to put people back to work. This particular bill in no way, shape or form does anything to meet that objective.

[Translation]

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House this afternoon to speak to Bill C-113, because according to me and according to my colleague, although this bill is apparently supposed to improve the present situation, if we consider the polls in Quebec and elsewhere, it is clear most people are against this kind of reform, because they do not perceive it as such. Now there are polls and polls. The Tories opposite say that the political polls confirm their popularity, but I am talking about the popularity of this particular bill.