

Supply

I heard two petitions being presented this afternoon and they interested me. One was from the Peterborough area, and one was from the Toronto area. The petitions were to encourage and ask the government to live up to its commitment of November 24 though unanimous consent in the House to seek the elimination of poverty among children. Two Conservative members tabled these petitions.

How can this government say on the one hand it is trying to eliminate poverty for children and then turn around and say that it is going to cut UI benefits for recipients from 60 per cent to 57 per cent?

What is that going to do to the buying power of those poor people who are on unemployment insurance? What is that going to do to my constituents who have five children and are losing 3 per cent? The real impact is 5 per cent.

• (1700)

In their words that means a bag of milk less or they would have to make a decision. Who is not going to eat this week?

Sounds pretty drastic. To us in this House, 3 per cent may not mean a whole lot. It might mean \$20. To those people who are getting less than \$300 a week, with families to support, rent to pay, it is an awful lot of money. Let us not downgrade the importance of maintaining the benefits we have.

Let me state one thing. Although I support this motion tonight, I do not forget the impact of the Liberal motion back in 1978 when the Liberals reduced benefits from 66.75 per cent to 60 per cent, with the full support of the current government. That was even more drastic than the present reduction.

We have to look at ways of trying to make things better for Canadians. We have to look at ways and means of ensuring that Canadians have an opportunity to work. The reason I am supporting this motion this evening is that these changes to UI will not do anything to create employment.

I have heard it said and I have read in *Hansard* from previous debates that this is a form of encouraging people to stay at work. Can you imagine, this is a form of encouraging people to stay at work because we are going to penalize them now. We are going to penalize them because they want better working conditions. They want to change jobs. They are being sexually harassed and they have to tolerate totally undesirable conditions. Now they are going to be forced to stay in those conditions.

It is true simply because of the indignation that they are going to have to go through to prove their case. You

have to understand that. If you do not understand that you do not understand anything. They have got to go through the process. Tell me, show me and introduce me to an employer who will admit to sexual harassment and I will kiss your feet.

What about another case where an employee works and—

Mrs. Browes: That's not true.

Mr. Samson: Only the feet. What about the case where an employee in a unionized shop stands up for the rights of a fellow employee. He knows that his fellow employee is being discriminated against or for whatever reason, the employer is throwing a barrage of insults at him, totally uncaring about the employee's feelings. He stands up for that co-worker's rights. As a result, he gets fired. Do you think the employer is going to say on his separation slip that he stood up for the rights of his fellow employee. He is going to say: "Okay, give him his benefits". There is no way that an employer is going to admit that he or she was wrong.

I urge and I plead with all those Conservative members who believe as we do that there are strong wrongs in the language of the current Bill C-105. I urge them to support this motion to ensure that there is some fairness and some equality for unemployed workers in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Marc Robitaille (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments made by my colleague from the New Democratic Party and I must say that I am very surprised by some of his statements which I consider totally unfounded and which could be misleading for the public. I heard these allegations today and I am surprised to see my colleague participate in this sort of exercise.

For example, he made a statement to the effect that a worker who is employed for a period of eight weeks, then decides to change jobs to improve his lot or for any other reason and after eight more weeks, is laid off because there is no work or for any other reason, would not be eligible for UI benefits. I ask my colleague: Is he really serious when he makes such a statement? So far as we know, this is totally unfounded. This is not a true statement; it is utterly false. I trust that the hon. member was mistaken when he said that, perhaps because he is not familiar with this issue, and did not do this intentionally. I would appreciate it if the member gave us an explanation, because this is a totally unfounded statement.