

even get a credit card, for God's sake. They gave it away for about a quarter of what it was worth.

All of a sudden, after the new owner had split the real estate assets off, he declared bankruptcy and threw nearly 2,000 employees out of work. Those employers have been trying to get this government to do the right thing and have a parliamentary investigation through the transport committee. They have not received their moneys yet.

There was a deal that this government had put together with the new owners that offered protection, job security, wage protection to those employees after the sale for, I think, a period of 24 months.

As soon as that agreement expired, this government did not have the good faith to step in, admit that it had sold it to the wrong company, admit that it had made a mistake, and make sure that those workers had the wage and pension protection that they should have.

When the hon. parliamentary secretary gets up and says "trust us", how can we when we have already seen what the government has done to the lives of Route Canada employees. Their lives have been thrown into disarray, some after working for that company for 18 years and 20 years. Perhaps the government opposite is saying: "Wait until we come in, because we are going to come in with a wholesale package that is going to protect workers". It has had an opportunity with Route Canada employees to protect their jobs, to protect the interest of those employees in a company that this government and the people of Canada had owned. It was remiss, and it renege on that responsibility.

I also have to take a crack at my friends opposite. The member for Nickel Belt is a gentleman who participates greatly in debate in this Chamber. I have no question about where his loyalties lie with the workers of Canada. It is also ironic—and I should put it on the record—that, in dealing with the Route Canada employees, just recently the House committee that may look at it made a decision to defer it. There was a motion put forward by the Liberals, and they made that decision.

It is interesting that the New Democratic member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan who was on that committee voted with the government to defer a full investigation as to how Route Canada was sold in the first place and why

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the interests of the workers were not paramount and looked after by this government. I would only hope that the next time that committee meets an individual such as my friend from Nickel Belt, who does have the interest of the workers at heart, perhaps will represent his party at that table. Then maybe we can see some real progress toward a full investigation of that fiasco.

Reform of the Bankruptcy Act is absolutely essential. Do I have faith that this government is serious about reforming it? No. Do I think that Bill C-217 goes far enough? No, I do not think it does, but it is a start in the right direction because it takes the workers and it puts them in priority so that their sweat and labour get recognized when a company goes bankrupt. That is something that everyone in this House should recognize and should affirm, and the rest of it could come later.

In conclusion, I wish to offer my support of these humble beginnings so that the interest of workers and the equity that they put into a company get recognized when the company unfortunately, like happens many times these days, gets forced into bankruptcy for whatever reason.

Mr. Thompson: Wind it up. We want to speak on this matter.

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): My hon. friend over there has asked me to wind it up. I did not know that he had been made Speaker.

I am very pleased to support this initiative. I would hope that hon. member's opposite will see their way clear to do the same thing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi): Mr. Speaker, it is not very encouraging to hear a member of the Liberal Party, which was instrumental in bringing our country to the brink of bankruptcy over a period of 12 years—

Mrs. Maheu: That's not nice!

Mr. Harvey (Chicoutimi): —and increasing the debt to \$200 billion in just a few years, and which allowed inflation to rise to 13 or 14 per cent and interest rates to 22 per cent, I repeat, it is not very encouraging to hear him criticize the government for its consistent economic policy.