

Supply

To come back to the motion of the Liberals which was tabled at the very last minute, this is not something which was proposed two or three weeks ago, or before the holiday season, this is a motion—and I want every Canadian to know it—which was tabled last night, five minutes before midnight, not fifteen, no, five to midnight. It reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government's policy of denying unemployment insurance benefits to workers who quit their jobs or who are dismissed is "too severe",—

Before Christmas, when Bill C-105 was tabled, I had consultations by phone from my office. During the holiday season I met in Amos, on December 23, people from la *Boîte à Copains*, ladies who were worried about Bill C-105. With my political assistants from Senneterre, Val-d'Or and Amos, we conducted a telephone survey and so on. During that period, I was quite apprehensive about Bill C-105. Therefore, I decided to tour my riding, and more precisely on January 12, 1993—

Mr. Prud'homme: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I must say to my hon. friend that I have known him for a very long time and I know he would not want to mislead the House or the Canadian people. The motion he referred to was tabled in accordance with our rules. It became official yesterday evening at six o'clock pursuant to the Standing Orders. Maybe the member read it at five to midnight yesterday, that is always possible in our offices, but the rules are very specific: pursuant to the Standing Orders, a minister of the Crown announced at the beginning of the week that Wednesday, therefore today, would be an allotted day. Consequently, according to our rules, we had until five o'clock yesterday evening to prepare for this opposition day.

If there were any surprises, they came from the hon. minister. That is also in the rules. In accordance with the Standing Orders, the minister of the Crown announced only Monday that today would be an opposition day. We had until five yesterday evening to study the question we would like to debate. It was tabled. I see the clerks of the House; they know this motion was tabled before six o'clock in accordance with our rules; otherwise it would not have been admissible. Therefore, whether we agree or not with what you said does not matter; we must not mislead the Canadians.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I am sure the hon. member is perfectly right. It is a point of order. We have resolved that. I will carry on with debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Saint-Julien: I took note of the hon. member's speech; he is very experienced in the House. I also note that this motion was tabled after December and January, in fact it was tabled at the beginning of February, on February 1, two months later. Lord forgive the Liberals for being late in presenting this motion.

As I was saying, I held some consultations. Before I did, I informed the local media, the unions and the workers what were the issues concerning eligibility for UI benefits. I explained to them, in several pages, what the bill was about and what the position of the government was. In this January press release, I even told the workers of my riding that in 1978 the Minister of Finance of the time, who is now Leader of the Opposition, had reduced the benefit rate of insurable earnings from 66 2/3 per cent to 60 percent. This was a reduction of 6 2/3 per cent. It was a regressive measure because it applied immediately to everyone receiving UI benefits and all new claimants.

I also explained UI costs, the reduction of UI premiums for new jobs and that we had to invest in resources. I also mentioned just causes for dismissals and the reduction from 60 to 57 per cent. After these consultations, I said that I would check on all those things in my riding while continuing a tour of Amos, Malartic, Senneterre, Matagami, Joutel, Val-d'Or and Barraute. The tour lasted a few days. I listened and met people, workers, unemployed people, mothers, residents of my riding who told me: "We would like you to write a letter to the minister and tell him what we want him to know."

I would like to pass on to you some of the comments made by people of Abitibi to the effect that the federal government is not contributing a penny to the UI fund; that, as early as 1990, with Bill C-21, the federal government had extended the waiting period from 1 to 6