

Government Orders

changed, although it promised something quite different during the election campaign.

Instead of proposing a strategy to promote employment, it has proposed the very opposite. Let me explain.

First of all, the number of weeks worked to be entitled to unemployment insurance has been increased. Instead of ten weeks of work to be eligible for employment insurance, people now need twelve weeks. In the Magdalen Islands, for instance, 43 per cent of the people who are on unemployment insurance cannot find work for more than 10 weeks. Today, I imagine the voters who elected the Liberal candidate in Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine must feel betrayed, because the 43 per cent who worked only the minimum number of weeks will now have to go on welfare.

There was no consideration for the seasonal aspect of the economy in the Maritimes and especially in the Magdalen Islands. Even worse, the government is doing the exact opposite of what it promised during the election campaign, so it is also a matter of political ethics, and perhaps that is the worst aspect of Bill C-17. The bill could be seen as a symbol of the ineffectiveness of this government and of the way it has started to mislead the people during its first mandate and its first six months in Parliament.

And the same holds true for the reduction in weeks of benefits. Speaking on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, the hon. member for Mercier explained how this bill would have a negative impact on all parts of the Maritimes, not only on the people affected by unemployment insurance cuts who will now have to go on welfare, but also on the small businesses that depend on the money these people spend.

I find it very hard to understand why members from the Maritimes who were elected by their constituents to provide a different kind of government have chosen to remain silent today and are not rising in the House to call their government to order and to say this does not make sense and it cannot send this kind of message. The unemployed are getting the following signal: the government is first going to make it harder to be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits, and then they will introduce social reform.

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This could explain in part the comment by Wood Gundy in an investor's guide which says that in the defence sector the government has finally decided to use restraint, but that the measures announced so far impact only on a small part of the economy. This means that instead of a real employment strategy we are given a series of smaller decisions taken to respond to fiscal pressures, to soothe lenders. The original solutions that

voters expected to put Canada and Quebec back to work have not been forthcoming.

Another thing which was clear and simple, and that we proposed in an amendment rejected by the Liberal government, was a lowering of premiums paid by employers. In the fall of 1993, immediately after the election, the government pulled one over on us and increased the premiums to \$3.07. Then, for Bill C-17, it made a wonderful announcement. In a press release dated March 16 the minister says: "One of the measures is the lowering of unemployment insurance premiums, which will decrease the cost of job creation".

This lowering to \$3 is scheduled for 1995. Tell me, do you know any unemployed who have long term jobs? I would like to know them. We must create jobs now, not just next year. It is not next year, or the year after or just before the next elections. The economy needs to be revived now. Wood Gundy said something I find very apt about the budget: "The government is hoping for a cyclical recovery of the economy to revive job creation". What it means is that the government machine is on automatic. What the government said is: "We do not have the means, we do not have the guts to make fundamental changes, and we do not have any clear idea of what we want in terms of job creation". So we have a piecemeal approach, we have measures that allow us to wait for a recovery. I am sure that every day, every month end, the ministers wonder whether the unemployment rate will finally go down a little, so they can use it as an argument. None of their actions has any impact. The automatic pilot is on, and we are waiting to see if the economy will recover somewhere.

Moreover, they are killing consumer confidence for those who could help the economy recover, namely UI recipients—who are also consumers—and civil servants whose wages are frozen.

Only a few months after being elected, this government told people: "We do not trust you. We will not enter into bargaining with you on behalf of others, since we would not be able to agree, anyway". It said that, just after the elections, to the Public Service Alliance of Canada which had told its members to vote for the Liberal Party in order to bring about changes. This government is devoid of political honesty and sends the message that, once elected, it does not have to honour its commitments. It is pure rubbish, of course. The way the Liberal government betrayed its campaign promises, especially with Bill C-17, will come back to haunt it.

Allow me to give you a little inkling of what this government is really like. During the election campaign, we were told that it would cut waste, tighten up the public purse, and manage everything as best as possible.

And then, it tries to put one over on us with this bill, giving borrowing authority to the CBC, a corporation which, in the past, has not always been the best of managers, and in fact, has often spent money unwisely and is still doing so. As we know, it offered \$28 million for the TV rights to the next Olympic Games, whereas TVA had offered \$10 million, while claiming that it had made no profit. Can you imagine the taxpayers' money being used to broadcast a world event for three weeks?