

*Government Orders*

As a proportion of the GDP the U.S. faces a formidable task, but it also recognizes that in the course of all this 35 million to 40 million Americans have no health coverage at all. In Canada we do have a universal system and we want to keep it that way.

• (1050)

We will be working together with the provinces to try to identify the cost containment measures in an effort to deliver the best medical care in the most efficient and effective way possible. The ministers of health and the ministers of finance, federally and provincially, had a very productive meeting in that regard. We will be working together in a co-operative fashion with the health care sector because it too has some very important views and some very important recommendations to make in this regard.

In conclusion, we welcome the realistic economic plan set out by the president. In many respects it moves the American economy in the direction the government has been moving the Canadian economy. We have had, as I indicated at the outset of my remarks, some pretty clear indicators the plan is working. We are coming out of a very stubborn recession. It is clearly not over in some parts of the world, but we are moving ahead.

We hope the economic plan which Mr. Clinton put forward last night will sustain the trend toward economic growth, economic activity and job creation in the United States. That will make the North American economy very strong.

We firmly believe that as their economy grows, so will Canada's because we have the fundamentals right. We have made the tough and difficult choices. We have put in place the structural reforms which were necessary: tax reform, liberalized trade, a better tax system, investments in people through improved skills upgrading and retraining, more investment in research and development. It is showing up in our ability to reduce the labour input costs, the unit labour costs and in our ability to become more productive and more competitive.

There are encouraging signs. However we have a deficit and a debt that clouds the future and we must

deal with it. That is why we are dealing with it here. I urge and I appeal to my colleagues across the way: Canadians do not want us to ignore this situation, they want us to deal with it and I ask for their support.

**Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to address a matter which is of great importance to millions of Canadians. The changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act contained in Bill C-113 will have serious consequences for many Canadians. It is very important that we discuss these changes in the House.

If Bill C-113 becomes law, people who leave their jobs without government-defined just cause or who are fired for misconduct will not qualify for unemployment insurance benefits. This change is very significant. What it says to any Canadian in a difficult or unfair work position is be careful, because if you quit or get fired, you are going to have to prove you deserve UI.

Bill C-113 tells Canadians in these situations that you are guilty until proven innocent. With this bill the burden of proof is transferred to the UI claimant, who is often a person in an extremely vulnerable position. This is unfair and it is the main reason why Bill C-105, Bill C-113's unloved predecessor, generated so much hatred.

Bill C-113 is the government's attempt to blunt that hatred. Under attack from every corner, including its own caucus, faced with daily embarrassments in the House and the minister's clumsy defence of the bill, the government had no choice but to retreat sheepishly in the hope of returning to fight another day.

Now we have Bill C-113, nothing more than Bill C-105 in sheepish clothing. It is a PR exercise. In the marketing of Bill C-113 minor changes are presented as major concessions. However the minister of employment made it clear that there is no question of compromising on the substance of Bill C-105, which is that voluntary quitters must be punished.

Bill C-113 attempts to make some positive changes. It attempts to make more clear the question of people who accept early retirement packages. It expands the definition of just cause and it attempts to be more sensitive toward sexual harassment.