

Government Orders

Ottawa four Acadian groups but gave them only a total of 60 minutes to explain the consequences of the reform, when they were entitled to twice that time.

However, a number of business representatives, friends of the party who benefit from what we call tax loopholes and tax conventions, did voice their support for the government's measures. These individuals also receive preferential treatment from this government and contribute to the Liberal Party's coffers. This one group alone was allowed to testify for 47 minutes, whereas normally they would have been entitled to 30 minutes. However, because they were voicing their support for such hateful measures as cuts to unemployment insurance and because they spoke the same language as the government, viewing the jobless as lazy, they were allotted 50 per cent more time than they would normally have had.

I am flabbergasted to see that, in politics, there are people who behave this way toward Quebecers and Canadians, and dismiss offhand the lives of others, people who have no sense of fair play, the fair play which the members opposite claim to have, the same members who profess to be great Canadian democrats who listen to all Canadians. When we see things like this happen, we have some very serious doubts about the honesty of these individuals.

I would also point out that when the witnesses from the Maritimes testified, no Reform members were on hand because, despite what they say about being great Canadians from coast to coast, each time an issue arises which affects that part of the country east of Manitoba where they have no representation, then they become a little less Canadian. I find this rather sad.

Thursday evening, on the last day of hearings, there was one Bloc member on hand and no Liberal members, except for the chairman, and no Reform members. Perhaps they prefer to go out and dine in a good restaurant on Thursdays. In any case, the scheduled witnesses were from Newfoundland. When they showed up, they were astounded and scandalized. That evening, we were quite pleased when we were told that there was only one party in the House of Commons willing to defend Newfoundlanders and Maritimers, and that party was the Bloc Quebecois. How very cynical of this government. The other party is also blatantly guilty of not taking matters seriously.

• (1705)

In view of all this, of the cynicism displayed by this government in spite of its positive bias for employment, in view also of the proposed cuts to the UI program and the way the people who are the hardest hit by unemployment are being treated, I cannot help but compare their treatment to the coddling treatment of Canada's wealthiest families.

This morning and again this afternoon, family trusts were discussed. We were reminded that, year after year, the government deliberately forfeits between \$350 million and \$1 billion in revenue, owing to a policy put in place by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1972 and commonly known as family trusts. I cannot help but contrast the preferential treatment given to the wealthiest families in Canada against these cuts to the unemployment insurance program and their destabilizing effect on rural communities in Quebec and the Maritimes.

I cannot help either, since the two bills were debated one after the other, but think about the tax treaties in Bill S-2 and how major Canadian corporations have managed to dodge taxation and pocket hundreds of millions of dollars every year. I cannot help but notice that this government will cut \$5 billion in social programs, and in the unemployment insurance program in particular, over the next three years, and in that it treats ordinary citizens the way I just described.

I would have liked to speak longer, but you are signalling that I have only one minute remaining. I will say this. I urge the government to reconsider its position on Bill C-17, in particular regarding the proposed cuts to unemployment insurance, because these measures will completely destabilize several communities in the Maritimes and in Quebec.

I would also request, with respect to another measure contained in this bill, namely wage freeze, to return to a better frame of mind. Twice in the matter of four years action had to be taken by the International Labour Office to remind the Canadian government it is required to abide by international conventions concerning free collective bargaining. When in opposition, the Liberals denounced the freezes imposed by the Conservative government, but they are now following their lead.

I am calling for a return to a better frame of mind because the government cannot go on like this, treating the people of Quebec and Canada with the kind of arrogance, sarcasm, cynicism and brutality they have demonstrated over the past few months. I hope for a return to a better frame of mind.

[English]

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I too serve on the Standing Committee on Finance and I am very disappointed in listening to the previous member's comments. It seems to me that he has a different version of the facts than I have. I was there and heard some of the comments and some of the explanations given.

With respect to the people he had invited who were kicked out and went to the media after, it was quite clear that some of the parties did not have an invitation or arrived unexpectedly and were allowed to present their cases. Both of them agreed that they would present their cases within a half an hour. The chairman of the standing committee gave permission for that