

Unemployment Insurance Act

15,000 fewer people living in the Province of Saskatchewan. We are losing population because of the lack of jobs and the lack of commitment of the Government to regional job development.

The Member for Elk Island (Mr. O'Kurley) says that his Government knows that Canadians will take advantage of the opportunity not to work. The Member from South Shore put it even more bluntly, he said that he did not like to see the unemployed rip off the country.

I would like those Members and other Members who have the same attitude to tell that to the working poor of this country, to tell that to the 40 per cent of families living below the poverty line who have both husband and wife working. They are not ripping off the country. They are trying to survive. Tell that to the people who are living below the poverty line and are paying taxes. I think it is outrageous that people who live below the poverty line actually have to pay taxes. Is that a compassionate government? Is that a government that cares for people?

Less than 1 per cent of the unemployed are so-called ripping off the system. The unemployed in this country have a better record at not committing fraud than the members of the PC caucus, a far better record. The Member may be tired of unemployed ripping off the country, but the people of the country are tired of the PC Government ripping off the country.

A Member opposite made the comment that Canadians want to work and I certainly agree with that, certainly with respect to small businesses. I would like to focus on that group for a few moments. Small businesses create more jobs than does any other sector of our economy. Small business people often work 50, 60 and more hours a week to make ends meet. They are the industry in this nation that is, in many areas, keeping the economy moving. And what thanks do they get from the Government? Small businesses are suffering under high interest rates. In my region of the country small businesses are having a difficult time and high interest rates are certainly making it more difficult. That is true in other regions of the country as well. They have been hit with bank charges. The Government has introduced a Bill supposedly to deal with bank charges but it certainly did not think of small businesses when it dealt with bank

charges. The governing Party says that it is a friend of small business. Well, you do not need many friends like that.

That Party should take a lesson from this Party, the New Democratic Party, which is in fact looking after the interests of small business. It is our Party which recently introduced a motion calling upon the Government to make small business its first priority. It was this Party that introduced a motion recently which received the unanimous consent of the House, which called on the Government to make small business the first priority of the Federal Business Development Bank.

That is a direction that the Government could take. It could begin to implement some changes to help create some jobs in this country, because Canadians do want to work, but they need the opportunity to work. Unless the Government is going to create an environment in which there are opportunities, then people will not work, and certainly small business needs opportunities. Small business often works on a low-profit margin and works long hours. Small business is the industry in this country which is creating jobs, they are the ones who should be having some advantages.

• (2210)

We are waiting, Mr. Speaker. We hope that the Government will take some direction regarding our motion with respect to the Federal Business Development Bank. We are still waiting. We are not holding our breath but we are waiting.

In the meantime, what has this Party done to small business? It has introduced an unemployment insurance Bill and budget cuts which are going to directly affect small businesses. We have heard all sorts of speeches and all sorts of very valid comments about the effect that this Bill will have on the workers in this country and about the disadvantaged in this country. Certainly small business fits into that category.

This is a Bill which is going to put the burden of social programs directly on the backs of workers and small business employers. That is a sad comment to make in this day and age. This is a government which is cutting some \$3 billion that it took from general revenue to put into the unemployment insurance program. That is