

Adjournment Debate

[English]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): It is my duty to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill S-12, an act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

 PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT
MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38(1) is deemed to have been moved.

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Madam Speaker, on December 4, I asked the Minister of Employment and Immigration what she would do to prevent the transfer of 200 General Electric jobs from Montreal to Fairfield, Connecticut.

I pointed out that Canadian General Electric had announced the closing of its Montreal plant which had been manufacturing various types of light bulbs in Montreal for 30 years and that the company had now decided to close that plant as part of its rationalization program. As you know, Madam Speaker, General Electric is an American company with its head office in the United States but with plants all over the world including Canada.

During the election campaign of 1988 we tried to alert Canadians to this consequence of the free trade agreement. We said that with the free trade agreement American companies in difficult times would rationalize their operations by closing Canadian plants and transferring the production to their plants in the United States.

As a matter of fact, the Economic Council studied the free trade agreement in 1988 and published its report on it, a report called *Venturing Forth*. It said that it clearly indicates that without improvements in Canadian manufacturing productivity, increased U.S. competition could result in a net decline of output and employment in 17 of the 36 industries studied, virtually all of them in manufacturing. Some firms will have to merge, others will have to close. The electrical products industry would account for 40 per cent of all the job losses in manufac-

turing. The output of electrical products is projected to fall by 15 per cent and employment by 8 per cent.

The Economic Council of Canada said that as a result of free trade, the electrical products industry would be hit the hardest, and here we have General Electric closing in Montreal within half a year after the agreement goes into force.

• (1850)

Each time that we ask the government to do something about job losses in industries like General Electric and the others that have closed down in Montreal, the government simply ignores the question and boasts about its great record in job creation. Well, when we look at that record, it is not as good out there in the real world as the government pretends in this House, and those people who are suffering from unemployment and layoffs know that.

Look at some of the reports that have been published. I have here from 1988 a Statistics Canada report saying that 63 per cent of the jobs created in the first half of 1988 were low paying clerical and sales positions and that the majority of them were in Ontario and Quebec. The same thing is true with respect to the quality of jobs. A great majority of those jobs are either temporary, part-time, or at minimum wage or without unionization, with the result that many people who have those jobs cannot really support a family and start a home.

When the government talks about its great employment record, it always compares it to the worst year of the recession. It always points to what happened under the Liberals in 1981 and 1982. Those were the worst years of the recession and it was common not only to the Liberal government in Canada but to governments throughout the western world.

I would like to point out to the House that when you look at the Liberal record over a period of time, you will find that our record was way ahead of that of the Conservatives. For example, in the period of Liberal government from 1965 to 1980, the average rate of unemployment was 5.6 per cent over 15 years. Here we have a government that came in in 1984 following the recession when the upturn was in place, and the best it