

*Government Orders*

about to announce additional cuts of \$1.25 billion in the UI program. That is a lot of money.

In spite of the fact that the public service, the crown corporations and the private sector are all experiencing cuts, closures and massive layoffs, Bill C-96 is silent on job creation.

• (1320)

Let me give a few examples of such cuts. First, by 1997, Bell Canada will have closed nine regional offices in Quebec alone. It also intends to close three auditing offices.

This company, which employs 46,000 people, hopes to lay off 10,000 of them over the next three years. A large number of these people are members of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada. This is a 22 per cent reduction of the company's staff. Bell has 28,606 employees in Ontario and 17,300 in Quebec. It intends to reduce its staff through voluntary termination of employment, early retirement and outright layoffs. It should be noted that Bell cannot justify such major cuts, given the huge profits generated last year. Moreover, during the first six months of 1995, the company paid \$35 million in dividends, which is as much as it did for the same period last year.

Recently, a group of Bloc Quebecois members, including myself, met with officials from the company and the union, here in Ottawa. We heard both sides. Following these meetings, I personally feel that these massive layoffs are totally unjustified, particularly since Bell is among the telephone companies employing the smallest number of people per line in North America. Bell has always made substantial profits. I salute the courage and the determination of the employees of the company and also of their union, which seeks to protect the rights and benefits of its members against a management strategy designed to produce massive layoffs.

I would also like to salute the 2,000 delegates who are attending the Ontario Federation of Labour convention, which has been going on in Toronto since Monday night. Yesterday, they marched down Bay Street, where Canadian banks and large corporations have their headquarters, to protest against Mike Harris' right wing policies, especially against the first piece of legislation his government enacted, which repealed the anti-scab act and makes the creation and certification of trade unions more difficult.

I would like to quote a statement made by an American, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who told the convention delegates: "Do not allow the right to destroy all the accomplishments of many past generations". I could not agree more.

The Harris government has decided to dismantle the Ontario Labour Code. Moreover, it wants to reduce the size of the labour ministry by 46 per cent, which will mean fewer occupational health and safety inspectors, fewer air quality technicians, fewer officials to enforce minimum work standards, etc.

I am concerned about all these cuts and these attacks against workers in Ontario, the richest province in Canada.

The federal government, and the provincial governments of Ontario and Alberta, which are going after the poorest members of society in an attempt to put their financial house in order, are on the wrong track. They will only increase poverty. I believe that the way to go, instead, is job creation initiatives, tax fairness, a better redistribution of wealth, and increased social security.

Both at the provincial and federal levels, anti-scab legislation is not only essential, but urgently needed. I was very disappointed by the vote taken the day before yesterday by the members of this House who rejected by 144 against and 104 for the bill presented by my Bloc colleague, the member for Manicouagan. However, I salute the courage of a great number of Liberal members who supported the bill and who were in agreement with it, under the previous Conservative government. On the other hand, I denounce all the ministers, especially the labour minister, who voted against it.

• (1325)

Following the example of Quebec and British Columbia, such an act at the federal level would avoid the worsening of labour conflicts, as was the case at the Ogilvie flour mill, in Montreal, where the strike lasted for 15 months.

Finally, I will say that I support the FTQ's request for the strengthening of the present succession rights of workers, should a Crown corporation be privatized or a private company under federal jurisdiction be disposed of. This problem has arisen mostly with the sale of Canadian airports.

To conclude, I stress that I will vote against Bill C-96.

**Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues, I welcome the opportunity to speak about the Act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development.

Bill C-96 establishing the Department of Human Resources Development flows from the June 1993 reform and is another demonstration of this government's desire to centralize. The Liberal Party of Canada, faithful to the objectives established by its guru of the last decades, Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, took office at the House of Commons in October 1993 with the clear intention of giving government in Canada a more centralized