

Government Orders

1993 will be raised to \$3.07 as of January, which is the case now, but the rate will be reduced to \$3 in 1995.

Let us see what happens if we pursue this scenario.

If the Liberals had maintained the old premium formula, we would have lost 9,000 jobs in 1994 and 31,000 jobs the year after. By raising premiums to \$3.07, the Liberals get the following result: 9,000 jobs lost in 1994 they realize that, they said so themselves and 9,000 jobs gained in 1995, which means a grand total of zero. We lose 9,000 this year, we create 9,000 the year after, and the result is zilch. Wow, that is really something. Or so they say.

Actually we are not talking about 40,000 new jobs but 31,000 jobs saved and 9,000 new jobs after losing 9,000. Obviously, the end result of their excellent theory is zero.

We must conclude that once again, the government is trying to fool the public, but today's public is better informed and no longer prepared to swallow this kind of proposal.

In any event, it is clear that the previous government was a failure and that the Liberals will not be an improvement. The government should no longer play a leading role in creating jobs. Recent figures have shown that small businesses have been the main source of new jobs during the past few years and will continue to play that role. The Liberals realize that. Give credit where credit is due.

Today, for investors and small businesses, the government's role should be to protect public finances. A good government should control its spending. A good government should control the deficit, and by the same token, a good government will restore a climate of confidence.

The economy is based on confidence, and governments—I said governments—undermine that confidence by being inconsistent and have done so for far too long. To create employment we do not need construction equipment, as the Prime Minister seems to think. We need to restore a healthy climate of confidence that will encourage genuine economic recovery, which in turn will attract investment and by the same token create jobs, durable jobs.

However, we are convinced that because of overlapping programs and interdepartmental duplication, the federal government will never manage to meet this very simple objective. However, a sovereign Quebec that is master of its own destiny and controls the levers of its economy and decision-making processes will be able to meet this immense challenge. There is no doubt about that. We know, as Félix told us, that the best way to kill a man is to keep him from working.

• (1335)

The Deputy Speaker: Since there is no one to take the floor for questions and comments, we continue with the debate.

I wanted to recognize the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair, but I do not see her in the House. The hon. member for Kent does not seem to be here either. Since it is the Liberals' turn—

[English]

I would request hon. members to get the member for Windsor—St. Clair as quickly as possible, please.

[Translation]

Is there a question or comment for the Official Opposition?

Some hon. members: No.

[English]

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this debate to speak to the government's proposed changes to the unemployment insurance program and in particular those changes that address the problems of low income Canadians and their dependants.

These changes to unemployment insurance are the first step toward a reform of our social security programs. They are the first step toward making these programs more responsive to the needs of Canadians as this country enters the 21st century.

The government is not taking this step unilaterally. The Minister of Finance engaged in extensive discussions with Canadians before bringing down the 1994 budget. The Minister of Human Resources Development has consulted and will continue to consult with business, labour and Canadians from every walk of life about social security reform.

This government knows that the life of every Canadian will be affected for many years to come by the results of this reform. That is why we are taking steps to ensure that Canadians will receive maximum benefits from these changes.

We have also taken special measures in our proposed changes to the unemployment insurance plan to protect those Canadians who are most vulnerable, those with low incomes who support children, aged parents or other dependants.

Under the current unemployment insurance rules, people who claim unemployment receive a benefit rate of 57 per cent no matter what their circumstances. Under our proposed changes there would be a two part benefit rate, 60 per cent for those with lower incomes who have dependants and 55 per cent for all others.

To qualify for the higher benefit rate a claimant must have insurable earnings of \$390 per week or less and have dependants. This would entitle the claimant to \$234 weekly in