

Government Orders

This is an argument that with government appointees on that appeal board it will wind up not giving due process. It is a serious example in which natural justice is compromised in the allegations here, and it is never answered.

At this stage of the game all that can happen is the hope that in the other place there will be substantial hearings on this bill and that closure today will be rectified. It is unfortunate that the elected representatives of Canadians again face closure in this House, that they are unable to examine in careful detail this odious piece of legislation, particularly when even a committee of this House has recommended improvements in the regulations for due process before these committees, which have been continuously denied.

Our only hope lies with the place next door. It is ironic that we as members of the House of Commons wind up appealing to the other place, as odious as it is, to hold decent and fair hearings on this matter.

Hopefully, when it calls those hearings and looks in detail at the committee report, rather than just rubber stamping it, the committee will call witnesses before it such as Leila LeCorps-Tremblay, Nancy Jennings, Rachel LaBelle, Michael Cassidy, Jack Miller, and Val Bourgeois. The last person is an individual who went before a House of Commons committee. At the end of his testimony the Tories decided at that committee that freedom of speech does not apply and expunged his entire testimony from the record and then let another individual put virtually the same testimony on the record.

Hopefully, in the other place when its committee's hearings are held freedom of speech will be available and Val Bourgeois will be able to speak freely. Lauren Hopkins is another witness it may want to hear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robitaille: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to remind the hon. member and this House, regarding the testimony of Mr. Val Bourgeois, that the issue was raised in this House and brought to the attention of the Chair. The Chair did recognize that the committee had every right to make the decision it made.

[*English*]

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, a majority government is justified in doing virtually anything, including suppressing freedom of speech. My concern is that we can no longer assure that there is freedom of speech. The hope is that in the other place when it decides to hold committee hearings on this matter it will look at a broad range of witnesses who have had some experience with these government appeal boards and the lack of due process.

I hope that it will take the example of the ninth report of the standing committee on regulations and examine its recommendations for implementing due process, so that when people go before these boards, in particular the unemployment insurance board, they will be guaranteed a fair hearing with due process.

• (1605)

Those are the remarks I would like to make. I hope that they will have the opportunity to be considered since the government, with closure, has imposed its kind of free speech.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how many times I have risen to speak under government closure. The government is applying a time limit on debate in order to limit the remarks of various members of this House who are speaking on behalf of the constituents they represent.

Bill C-113 was brought in by the government on February 17, 1993. It will reduce the unemployment insurance benefits from 60 per cent to 57 per cent of insurable earnings as of April 4, 1993. People who voluntarily leave their jobs without just cause, or lose their jobs through personal misconduct, will no longer receive unemployment benefits.

A board of referees is to be given clear powers to protect the privacy of victims of sexual or other harassment, if they come forward and make an issue of it. But I believe this is going too far for women in the work place who simply cannot condone the harassment they sometimes go through and choose to quit their jobs in order to escape.

Workers who leave their jobs through voluntary severance and downsizing will be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.