

Government Orders

Those are not the values this country was built on, but they are the values that are quickly overtaking our society under the leadership of this Tory government.

I said this bill is not about training, it is about money. It is a continuation of this government's determination to solve the problems it has created by bearing down with a steamroller, squeezing every last possible penny it can from Canadians, not caring who gets crushed in its path.

This bill extracts \$4.2 billion from Canadians who are already living in dire straits. It does it in two ways. First, it pulls out the government's \$2.9 billion, money that the government properly contributes to compensate for regional disparities and to support fishermen. Aside from this legitimate government contribution, Canadians need to know that the unemployment fund is self-supporting. In fact, in recent years it has produced a surplus.

Now the workers who contributed to the unemployment fund when they were employed are being asked to pay for the economic policies of the government that have in the last five years increased the poverty of the regions of Canada outside major metropolitan areas. The remaining \$1.29 billion of the government's \$4.2 billion money grab will come directly from the insurance benefits of the unemployed. The minister has said repeatedly that the unemployed are not paying for training, but that is exactly where the money is coming from. Unemployed workers will do without food and clothes for their children so the minister can top up the training budgets that have been slashed by her government.

Again, those who can least afford it will be the victims. The poorest regions will lose the most. Workers in Newfoundland will lose an average of \$2,400 while Manitoba workers with a lot less unemployment will lose less than half of that.

No doubt the minister expects that provinces and municipalities across the country will pick up the welfare bill—this at a time when the government is not meeting its commitments to cost-share social programs.

The best demonstration that this bill is about money, not people, is in the provision that allows the government to hound people for up to six years to collect overpayments of UI benefits even when it was no fault of their own.

This bill deliberately misleads Canadians about how it is going to spend their money. It says piously in clause 20 that it will spend no more than 15 per cent on training programs. But then later on in the bill it says that in addition to this 15 per cent the government can contract not only for the administration but for the establishment or operation of training programs. These are not subject to the 15 per cent limit.

This is an unending tap for privatizing the employment services of the Department of Employment and Immigration. It explains why the minister in her estimates to the House has not provided for one additional person to administer all these wonderful new programs. The minister wants to privatize services to the most vulnerable at the most precarious time of their lives—when they are out of work. It is not the role of the private sector to be concerned about developing the potential and the talent of Canadians. It is their proper role to produce goods and services and make a profit. It is the job of the nation to invest in its people.

I have said this bill will create a sub-class of Canadians, destined to move from one low paid unskilled job to another, from one community to another, serving the ever changing needs of the market-place, never setting down roots, never knowing stability in their lives.

The government has looked at the statistics. It knows there are fewer young people coming into the market-place and that a crisis is looming in the supply of new workers. It knows that 70 per cent of the jobs that will be in our economy are those that are low-paid, unskilled, unstable and part-time. Its answer is to assemble in Bill C-21 an arsenal of whips and bludgeons to beat into submission the unemployed who, to survive, will have to stick with such jobs with no hope for anything better, ever.

This bill damages people and the nation. The Tory agenda is determined to grasp every last dollar from Canadians—\$6 billion through the GST, billions more through clawing back old age security, billions more in the government's failure to meet its commitments to fund education, social services and day care, and now another \$4 billion from the unemployed.

The government is selling off or starving to death the institutions of nationhood. VIA Rail is gone, Air Canada is gone. The National Arts Centre is strangling. The National Research Council has been stripped of millions. This government is systematically dismantling the frame-