

Government Orders

listens to the advice of members even at this late hour in those areas where it has already indicated that it was not favourably disposed to listen to the advice of the members.

I see the parliamentary secretary across the way. I do not believe he participated in all of our deliberations because I believe he was a parliamentary secretary to another minister at the time. He will know because of his conversation with other members of this House of the tremendous level of unanimity that was displayed in our proceedings. Members on all sides of the House got together and formed quite an extraordinary consensus on a piece of government legislation. I do hope the member has noted that, as I am sure he has.

One thing our committee was unanimous on was this whole business of increasing the amount of wage earner protection from \$2,000 to \$3,000. That is fine, but our committee recommended that the payroll tax scheme be abandoned—that scheme of course is part of the bill—and that it be replaced instead with a form of super priority whereby the wages of employees in the event of a bankruptcy or liquidation would have priority over virtually everything else.

I noted that the parliamentary secretary responded to a question from my hon. colleague from Thunder Bay—Nipigon by saying that in the case of Route Canada a super priority would not have helped the employees. I do not know if it would have helped them in all cases, but he has to remember how we proposed to go ahead with this scheme.

First of all, the scheme is kind of a two-step affair. What we proposed, at least as a committee doing the pre-study, was that there would be a super priority. The effect of that of course is first to remove this payroll burden on small and medium sized businesses, on all business and all employers actually. Second, there would be a fund to guard against any shortfall, that fund to be paid for by consolidated revenue. With the combination of these two obviously the employees of Route Canada would have been covered.

If the parliamentary secretary has read our recommendations carefully, he will recognize there are two components to that. The reason we want to have it that way is twofold. One is to cover the shortfalls and the second is to ensure expeditious payments to employees of com-

panies that have gone under. In other words, you could go in and take funds out of this pool, pay the employees, liquidate the assets and replenish that fund afterward. I believe that is something the parliamentary secretary should realize. I think it is very important for all of us.

Let us look at who is against super priority. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is against super priority. It is virtually against everything except abolishing social programs and stuff like that.

I have here a letter that was sent to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs dated October 11. It says in the second paragraph: "In particular, there is one recommendation to which we are totally opposed, namely the suggested method of super priority to fund a wage protection program". Interestingly enough this same group was also against the payroll deduction, which leads me to believe that it is against the protection for workers in any way, shape or form.

Who is the other group against this? The bankers. By coincidence these are the same bankers of course who were not that long ago against another provision of that bill, namely that of revindication of goods.

[Translation]

Bankers led us to believe, at least that is what they tried to do, Mr. Speaker, that, if a supplier could go and retrieve the goods supplied he has not been paid for, within 30 days of the bankruptcy, this would make the cost of the loan go up.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, as a member from Quebec, a similar provision already exists in the Quebec Civil Code. Members asked the bankers—and I was the first one to do so: "Must we conclude, therefore, that the interest rate on a commercial loan is higher in Quebec than elsewhere?" "No, they answered." The bankers were forced to admit that it was not the case. So, we asked them this: "If it is not higher in Quebec right now—in a jurisdiction where a similar, not absolutely identical, but similar provision exists to protect suppliers—why should we believe you when you say that this provision to authorize suppliers to go and retrieve goods would have such an effect elsewhere in the country?" Naturally, we dabbled for a couple more minutes, but we did not get an answer for the simple reason that there is none to give.