

The Budget—Mr. Bujold

employed, and the unemployment insurance program enables them to draw a decent income on which they can live all year long. Also, within the framework of this unemployment insurance scheme, the Canadian government and the Minister of Employment and Immigration have been able this year to put forward programs like the one under Clause 38, where we have carried out everywhere in this country countless projects which were extremely valuable for the collectivities concerned. We have also established this year the work sharing program, thus helping to maintain thousands of jobs. For these reasons, the unemployment insurance program is of utmost importance and must be maintained. The moneys that have been announced in the Budget for job creation programs will contribute to lower the unemployment rate throughout the country and will provide jobs for people who are experiencing difficulties, and also, in many cases, long term jobs.

• (1720)

[English]

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, surely the Member knows that nobody in our Party would suggest reducing the extent of the unemployment insurance system. We have repeatedly called for the Government to change the system to provide for extended benefits for the tens of thousands who are coming to the end of their Unemployment Insurance benefits. I ask the Member why we can find the money to pay people to do nothing. Surely there is reforestation in the Gaspé Bay, there is improvement of sewer and water systems, there is the rebuilding of schools, there are dozens of projects that could provide employment. The local people could tell the Government this. They could tell the Member this if he cannot take the time to look and see for himself what needs to be done so that people can be put to work doing something productive rather than being paid to sit at home while they draw Unemployment Insurance benefits or welfare benefits. These benefits are so harmful to the well-being of the people. I ask the Member to consider this.

[Translation]

Mr. Bujold: Mr. Speaker, I have just pointed out that the Department of Employment and Immigration has introduced in the course of last year two programs designed for that specific purpose, that is to hire people instead of keeping them idle on unemployment insurance. Those measures have allowed us to put them to work pursuant to Section 38 of the Act and to the Shared Work Program. They have allowed us to reach people who otherwise would have remained at home and return them to a productive activity within the community and make them work. That was the reason why we wanted to revitalize our employment programs and as the Minister of Employment and Immigration has pointed out on several occasions, he is open to any such suggestion. I am sure that the Hon. Member who will be sitting on the committee will make suggestions along that line, but I want to tell him that we already have

within the Department and under our legislation the services and facilities needed to hire that kind of people.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question from the Hon. Member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Bujold). He referred to the Shared Work Program and his Minister described it as being quite a success. He knows that the program had a low record in Quebec, the Province most affected by unemployment. How can he maintain that the program is a success when it has a rather uneven impact on the entire country and a very small one in Quebec?

Mr. Bujold: Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate my colleague for his tremendous progress in learning the language of Molière. Surely, within a few months he will be speaking French as fluently as most French Canadians.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, work sharing has been immensely popular throughout the land. Again, I say that the program will be as successful as expected if we can rely on the co-operation of each and every sector in this country, and I would especially urge my friend from the New Democratic Party to pressure all unions so they will also co-operate in implementing work sharing arrangements. I could give him examples in the Province of Quebec of unions that have refused to do so for a variety of reasons. But although the program had slower beginnings in Quebec, it has caught up with other Provinces. The results so far are extremely favourable, and so are the comments heard from those in Quebec who have benefited from the program.

Mr. Keeper: Yes, I want to be very clear, Mr. Speaker. Did I hear the Hon. Member say that unions in Quebec are responsible for the poor performance of the program in that Province? Can he realize that in order to be a good program it must have a goal? Why then should labour unions be blamed?

Mr. Bujold: Mr. Speaker, I referred earlier to my colleague's progress in learning the language of Molière, but let us not be carried away. I pointed out that one of the reasons why the program had slow beginnings in Quebec was that certain labour unions refused to accept it. Of course there were a variety of other reasons, but I concluded with the remark that the program was also tremendously successful in Quebec and has preserved thousands of jobs. The comments we have heard throughout the Province currently show the program has been very well accepted and is wanted mainly by the people at large.

[English]

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary did not answer the question of the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) in any way at all. I would like to put the question to him again in perhaps a different form. Could he tell the House why it is that the Liberal Government will not spend the money which it is now spending on Unemployment