

Supply

commitment to keep the rates at the rate of \$2.80 for insurable earnings for employees.

It is either the government is not telling Canadians the truth, which is very sad, or in the absence of these increases we could be looking at an accumulative deficit of the UIC fund of \$6 billion by the end of 1992 as a result of higher than expected benefit payments. I venture to say that in such instances money for retraining will be scarce and we will see another broken promise.

Today, my plea to the minister is to look at the facts, look at what is happening to our youth across Canada, look at what the policies of this government have done to the job opportunities for our young people, look at the consequences of cutting back on these programs that are so necessary to our young people. I hope, in his deliberations, the minister will take our opinions into consideration but, more than that, will take into consideration the needs of our young people across this country because without them all of our futures look bleak. It is not just a cliché to say that our future lies in our youth and that our youth will be competitive and will perform well if they are given a decent chance to get the tools that will help them to get the jobs to be productive citizens in our country.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Desjardins (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I must say I listened very carefully to what the hon. member said this morning about a very important subject: Canadian youth and its ability to function in our society. I would like to say to the hon. member that there are at least two perspectives one can have on Canadian youth. Of course we can focus on the problems of young people who are unable to function, but I would like to say to the hon. member that there are also young people in this country who function very well.

I myself, as a member of Parliament—and I am sure other members have done so recently—have attended a number of academic events in my riding such as graduations and scholarship awards, and I am sure that once they finish their education, those students will find jobs, because in today's world, a young person's chances of finding a job increase with the number of years of

academic training. I think the hon. member should realize that in Canada, we have young people who function quite well, and we should remember that and not focus exclusively on those who do not function well.

I may remind the hon. member, and I am sure he will agree, that youth unemployment has a number of deeply rooted and serious causes, which are connected with the phenomenon of dropping out of school. I think the hon. member will agree that when a young person drops out of high school, that does not help him find a job.

When looking for reasons why students drop out of school, we should not blame the federal government but society as a whole. When we have a society with social problems like poverty—I think everybody here will agree we are going through a recession—when we are in a situation like that, we see problems that are linked to poverty. There is a kind of vicious circle that makes life more difficult for our young people, but there is also the whole problem of the family unit that is under pressure. The hon. member knows as well as I do what those pressures have been like during the past decades, and the family environment is extremely important for young people, to help them persevere with their education.

So we have a problem that is linked to our education system and our training system, and we cannot put the blame exclusively on the federal government. The success of our young people depends on the success of a social partnership. Their success is linked to what the government does and what is done by all the provinces, by business, the unions and social groups. It is too easy to put all the blame on the federal government for the fact that some of our young people fail in their endeavours.

I would like to ask the hon. member—after all, it is easy for him to attack the government and say that 13 or 14 per cent of our young people are out of work—I would like to ask him whether he checked what the youth unemployment rate was in 1984, when his party, when the Liberals were in power? In case he doesn't know the answer, in 1984 youth unemployment was around 18.2 per cent.

Before accusing the government, perhaps the hon. member should look at the record of previous Liberal governments and stop to think before launching his accusations.