

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Laval-Est, on a question of privilege.

Mr. Della Noce: Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me, I heard the hon. member say, and if I am mistaken, my colleague can correct me.

[English]

When he talked about voluntary quitters, he said 4,000. My numbers are that in 1991 there were 225,000 and 80 per cent did not have a cause for leaving.

• (1840)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but this kind of mutual correcting is not, strictly speaking, a point of order but a matter of opinion or debate. The Chair cannot accept this as a point of order.

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the hon. member's comments. I think he deserves to be commended for his even temper and the fact that he insulted no one. Furthermore, I thought he quoted some very interesting statistics.

We cannot deny the fact, unfortunately, that there are people who abuse the unemployment insurance system. It is a fact, and I think if I were convinced it was a serious and urgent problem, I would have no hesitation in voting with the government. But that is not the case. Actually, I was glad to hear some statistics, because they confirmed more or less what I read a few days ago in *Le Devoir*. This newspaper concluded that abusers of the system represented only 1 per cent of claimants. I was delighted to hear the statistics quoted by the hon. member.

One of the questions I would like to ask him is this: Instead of penalizing everyone, should the government not have put the emphasis on manpower training? Instead of paying people to do nothing, to stay home, because I assume Canadians would rather work, why not

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put the emphasis on manpower training as they do in other countries, especially in Scandinavian countries where I believe more than two-thirds of the amount is allocated to manpower training? Would he agree this would be a better way for the government to invest its money?

If the answer is yes, how does he reconcile that with statements by his leader to the effect that we need to increase centralization?

[English]

Mr. Nault: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my colleague. First of all, I emphasize that this legislation in essence removes \$2.5 billion out of the system, out of the hands of Canadians who of course spend that money. When we talk about unemployment insurance, I am sure not a portion of it goes into savings accounts. It goes right back into the economy.

With the talk about coming out of the recession and looking to stimulate the economy, this government has done something quite interesting. It has removed \$2.5 billion out of people's pockets. Even though they are unemployed, they still spend that money.

It is difficult for me to understand why the government is doing what it is doing. Looking at the numbers, to me it is a smoke-screen to deal with the bigger issue. That is, this government lacks policy to deal with the unemployed.

There are a large number of unemployed Canadians. What should be asked and what we should be debating tonight are our suggestions as members of Parliament to get that large population of Canadians, 1.6 million who are unemployed, back to work. I would love to have that emergency debate, which is what we need in this country.

Instead we are pushed by this agenda of the government that there are so many cheaters, quitters and people who have to be pounded down to the ground by the government because they cannot be trusted. As opposition we fall into the trap of going with the agenda of the government.