

Supply

As critic for training and youth, I see that a young person will now have to work 910 hours over 52 weeks in order to qualify for unemployment insurance. That represents 17.5 hours of work per week in one year, every single week, in order to qualify. Otherwise, he will not be eligible. He must accumulate this minimum number of hours. So, it is now twice as hard for newcomers on the labour market to qualify for unemployment insurance.

• (1225)

And what do they do to unemployment insurance? They create a fund and make it available to the provinces, and tell them: "You can help yourselves to some of it, but only under certain conditions because we want to keep control over it, or else we are going to take it away".

But this fund the minister mentioned is made up of money contributed by employers and employees. Why is the federal government messing with this fund when, as everybody knows, it has not contributed a single penny to unemployment insurance since 1991? It is not this government who did that, but the Conservative government. But now it is turning a profit with unemployment insurance and using part of this profit to provide manpower training in a field which comes under provincial jurisdiction.

This is what we are against and what we are condemning. There is a small opening here. We saw that the Quebec National Assembly, while establishing some parameters, is continuing to emphasize the Quebec consensus on the need to repatriate all the money spent by the federal government in manpower training, even UI funds, because the federal government would use that money to continue to multiply programs and to maintain duplication.

To conclude, I ask the government and the Minister of Human Resources Development to be on the lookout, to listen more carefully to what Quebecers want. He will see that Quebecers, not only the sovereignists, the members of the Bloc Québécois or the Parti québécois, but all Quebecers want the Quebec government to be in charge, to be responsible for its policy concerning manpower, training and all related services. I will conclude on that and I thank you for your attention.

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comments made not only by the hon. member but also by the critic who spoke before him.

What struck me is the lack of sensitivity to individual Quebecers, whether they live in Montreal, in my riding of Mount Royal, in Trois-Rivières, Quebec City, Chicoutimi, Lac-Saint-Jean, or anywhere else in Quebec, because these people who paid their UI premiums and now need assistance as they become jobless are entitled to these benefits.

All their actions and remarks point to this: they want the power to make decisions with Canada's money. As usual, they forget to tell the truth. In fact, for every dollar invested in Quebec by an individual in the labour force, this individual receives \$1.33 when unemployed. They want to deprive every unemployed person of this 33 cents, which over time adds up to millions and millions of dollars. What a great policy.

They then completely overlook the fact that this change addresses realities in Quebec. Like other Canadians, Quebecers must adapt their skills, attitudes and abilities to the new society. They have completely forgotten this, and they want to forfeit a rather significant amount of money. We have injected over \$4.2 billion into this program, but they have forgotten this and are unwilling to tell their constituents. I find this very interesting. You do not want to tell—

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask the hon. secretary of state to please always address her comments to the Chair.

• (1230)

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to ask my hon. colleague the following question: does he not want to spread the news that the Government of Canada is pumping \$4.2 billion into the system instead of \$4 billion, including more than \$500,000 in measures for the unemployed?

Also, of the \$800 million, \$240 million would go to Quebec, for a total of \$747 million in extra money, and he wants to take what away. Does he really want to deprive his constituents of that? My constituents want jobs, they want retraining, they want training, they want decent working conditions, they want wage subsidies and remuneration supplements.

Regarding women, does my hon. colleague want benefits for women or does he want to take away benefits that help ensure the financial independence of women? We are talking about individual insurable earnings and basic employment insurance benefits calculated on these earnings that go to the women and not to government, for governance, but to each working woman.

In addition, women who are currently holding more than one job or working part time at different places will immediately qualify, but the hon. member does not approve of this change. He does not want them to be recognized as part of this change and those in need of assistance, like low income families with children, many of which are headed by women, to be afforded protection under this reform. There will be family income supplements, but he does not want to recognize the fact that this may mean an increase of up to about 80 per cent in the basic amount for low income families. He does not want to recognize that fact.

Neither do Bloc members, in spite of the fact that they are taking steps for reasons of efficiency relating to their culture, want UI recipients to be able to supplement their income by earning \$50 a week without seeing their benefits adversely affected. They do not want to recognize that maternity leave and parental leave allowances as well as sick benefits and temporary disability benefits are maintained and provide basic support to