

*Supply**[English]*

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to ask some questions and make some comments on the speech of the hon. member for Mercier. As always, she takes a very pessimistic outlook on this legislation.

For the record, Canadians from coast to coast participated in what was perhaps the most extensive consultation process in Canadian history. Over 100,000 people participated. The hon. member for Mercier was a very active member of the human resources development committee that was looking at the modernization and restructuring of Canada's social security system. The hon. member heard what I heard. She heard what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister heard.

Canadians were saying they wanted an unemployment insurance system, a social security system that would help the most vulnerable in our society, that would help Canadians find jobs and keep their jobs and to do that in a sustainable fashion. They realized the skyrocketing costs of unemployment insurance from \$8 billion in 1982 to \$20 billion in 1992. They realized the distortions which exist in the marketplace where 38 per cent of benefits are directed to 14 per cent of the firms and represent 12 per cent of the people. They realized that all these things needed to be changed because the status quo simply was not serving the people it was supposed to serve.

● (1035)

Throughout this process we engaged Canadians in a serious debate about the issues. If we look at the objectives and clearly analyse the EI bill we find that those objectives are met. The hon. member said this is a regressive piece of legislation. She should rethink, re-read and re-analyse what is in the legislation.

The hon. member does not talk about the progressive measures found in the legislation. Over 500,000 Canadians who were excluded and marginalized by the Unemployment Insurance Act will now be covered by the legislation. Part time workers count. Every hour, every dollar, every effort which they make will be rewarded under the legislation.

The hon. member did not talk about the family income supplement which will allow people to receive up to 80 per cent of their average earnings. The hon. member did not talk about that because it is too positive to mention. She did not talk about the people who are included in the legislation. She did not talk about the fact that low income Canadians will be able to earn \$50 without being penalized or taxed back. She did not talk about the fact that by reducing premium rates for business, job creation will be enhanced. Employees will be helped because they too will participate in the employment insurance fund.

The hon. member tried to depict the federal government as a government which imposes its rules and regulations upon the provinces. That is not the case. The legislation is quite open. It says that the federal government will negotiate with the provinces on wage supplements, top ups, self-employment assistance, skills and loans. It will also work together with the provinces on job corps partnerships.

Why is the hon. member continuing, like every member of the Bloc, this misinformation campaign? They are trying to confuse Canadians. Canadians know that the employment insurance program which was introduced speaks to the number one issue facing Canadians, and that is job creation. Over 100,000 jobs will be created directly as a result of measures taken by the bill.

I am quite surprised. The hon. member knows that the province of Quebec has historically benefited from the unemployment insurance program and it will continue to do so under the employment insurance program. She also knows that she will benefit from the \$300 million transition fund in high unemployment areas.

I have a simple question for the hon. member: Why does the Bloc Quebecois continue this misinformation campaign? Why does it not tell the real story to Canadians?

[Translation]

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the hon. member did not address the motion because, given its subject, he could only have agreed with me. We will discuss the overall UI reform project when we debate the UI bill.

The motion before the House this morning provides that Quebec should have control over manpower policy. The hon. member remained silent on that issue, because he knows that I am right. What is really important is to ensure that the unemployed have the best guarantees to get help to find decent jobs.

● (1040)

Let me digress for a moment to say that, yes, I did participate in the consultation exercise. Everywhere we went, Canadians told us that the real issue was jobs, not employability. And in order to create jobs, it is essential to have a co-ordinated manpower policy.

This is why this motion deals with manpower policy. In that regard, and regardless of the October 30 results, the National Assembly was unanimous in demanding, yesterday, that Quebec have control over the manpower sector, and that the central government pull out of that field of jurisdiction and stop interfering in it. The vote was unanimous: 96 to 0, with no abstentions. Moreover, that unanimity also exists among businesses, unions, co-ops and community groups.