

The member used the phrase "we are going to serve the needs of the people", and the hon. Minister of Human Resources Development in defending it said "we are going to reduce the risk".

The auditor general says this unemployment insurance program the way it is presently structured is increasing the risk. Why do the Liberals not do the proper thing and put it back to a true insurance program? They admit that by decreasing the premiums five cents they will create something like 20,000 jobs. I do not know how they know this, but that is what they say. If that is the case, why do they not put it back to a true insurance program and reduce the unemployment rate by 1.5 per cent to 3 per cent? That is hundreds of thousands of jobs.

• (1320)

It is totally inexcusable for the government to go off on all kinds of tangents and create more aspects for the program rather than do the right thing. I do not know how the hon. member could ever defend the fact that it is not becoming again a true insurance program.

Mr. Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, the government does not have any intention of going back to 1941. The basis of this reform is to ensure we answer the needs, the requests, and the demands of the new economy, which is completely different from the economy of 1941. In 1941 we were in the middle of a war. It was a completely different context. We did not have the new economic realities. We did not have computers and fax machines and the rise of a new economic class. We did not have the fundamental changes that have taken place in the last five years.

We are trying to invest not in the government programs per se, or the fonctionnaires, but in younger Canadians, in middle aged Canadians, and in older Canadians. We are trying to define what they need. Often what they need is also what the new economy demands. This is why we have to adapt our programs. This is why we should invest in the individual. It is up to the individual.

If I am not mistaken, the Reform Party has always upheld individual rights more than anything else. We are now investing in individuals. We have faith in Canadians to make the correct choice in order to find the course that is tailored to their needs and to that of the new economy. That is why I ask the hon. member opposite to support the government in this courageous initiative.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this opposition motion which reads:

Supply

That this House condemn the government for choosing to reform unemployment insurance in a way that maintains overlap and duplication in the manpower sector and thus prevents the government of Quebec from adopting a true manpower development policy of its own.

This opposition day follows on an historical event yesterday in the Quebec National Assembly, when all members present voted unanimously in favour of the following motion—96 in favour and no one against, a fairly rare occurrence in any Parliament:

That the National Assembly reaffirm the consensus expressed in this House on December 13, 1990, on the occasion of the ministerial statement on manpower adjustment and occupational training, to the effect that:

Quebec must have sole responsibility for policies pertaining to manpower adjustment and occupational training within its borders and patriate accordingly the funding allocated by the federal government to these programs in Quebec;

Within the current constitutional framework and in order to improve services to customers—

All Quebec members of Parliament, whether Parti Québécois, Quebec Liberals, Action démocratique du Québec, everyone in the Quebec assembly unanimously adopted this motion, stating that:

—Quebec must take over the control and management of various services pertaining to employment and manpower development and all programs that may be funded through the Unemployment Insurance Fund within Quebec's borders and must therefore receive the funding appropriate to such responsibilities;

The members of the Quebec National Assembly did not say: "Let the federal government give money to the unemployed in voucher form so they can take Quebec courses under an agreement between the federal and the provincial governments". No, what they said was: "Turn all of the responsibility over to Quebec, and it will handle things". This statement was supported by both the sovereignist government party and the federalist opposition in Quebec.

• (1325)

They also stated:

The Government of Quebec and representatives of business, labour and the co-operative sector agree to oppose any initiative by the federal government that would constitute an invasion of Quebec's prerogatives.

To find an example of this, one need look no further than clauses 61 and 59 of the bill, which show that, where no agreement is in place between the federal and provincial governments, the province will be penalized because the unemployed will not receive vouchers to purchase courses in Quebec. If this is not an invasion of our prerogatives, what is it? Is this not the kind of behaviour the federal government has been accused of for years?