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difficulties in finding suitable housing or in meeting nutritional needs, further marginalize the poor.

Losing a job often leads to poverty. By making drastic cuts to UI, the government has reduced the number of recipients, not because there are fewer unemployed workers, but because a smaller number of them are eligible for benefits.

In Canada, only 49 per cent of the unemployed qualified for UI benefits last month, as compared to 77 percent in 1990. As far as unemployment is concerned, the rate is 14.4 per cent in Quebec and it is seasonally adjusted, while the rate of unemployment in Ontario is 8.7 per cent. That is almost three percentage points lower.

To compare Quebec to Ontario or the rest of Canada, we must consider not only the number of persons who are unemployed, but more appropriately the number of persons who are employed; this is called the employment population ratio. It is quite simple. If 65 per cent of the population 15 and older has a job, therefore producing wealth, spending money on clothes and putting some in the bank, much more wealth will be produced than if 50 per cent of the same population was employed.

When you look at the difference between employment and population, you notice differences much greater and more alarming than those for unemployment. For example, the employment population ratio for Ontario is 59 per cent, as compared to 53.8 per cent in Quebec. This means that, quite apart from the unemployment rate, thousands of jobs would be required just for Quebec to match the level of employment in Ontario.

• (1550)

That is not all. What is absolutely tragic is that, if you compare Quebec to the rest of Canada, if you compile statistics on all of Canada minus Quebec, what do you find? You find that the overall employment population ratio for Canada is 59 per cent, while in Quebec, as I indicated earlier, it is only 53.8 per cent. This is a very substantial gap.

It is important to remind you why we are angry in Quebec, and I am not referring only to our anger but to the anger we can feel brewing in many people, ordinary citizens who are unable to find work, who are given funny looks by UI or welfare officers because they always take them for defrauders at first, and the anger of community groups striving to help those in need, and seeing their resources cut time and time again while the need for assistance continues to grow.

You may wonder what this has to do with the motion. The connection between the two is extremely important because, after a long process— of which I will relate the details, time permitting—we came to the conclusion that our only chance to

make it was to take control of all the levers, to pass all our legislation, to collect all our taxes, and to sign all our treaties, including treaties with the rest of Canada.

Let me read you a text which I recently came upon. It was written by René Lévesque, then a federalist Liberal minister responsible for family and welfare issues, at a conference on poverty held in Ottawa, on December 10, 1965.

Mr. Lévesque said: "It is absolutely essential, to use a redundancy, that the government primarily responsible for developing and implementing these measures on our territory be the Quebec government. This is the only way to ensure efficient action. It is also the only way to implement a co-ordinated policy for economic and social development which will truly put the accent on the individual".

We could use those same words today to explain our program.

Mr. Lévesque added: "We do not feel it necessary to prove that our government is closer to its population than Ottawa is. Our government is by far in the best position to adapt the possible solutions to the needs of its citizens. It is so because our government has the immediate data on land development, and also because it can monitor the implementation of its selected policies and make necessary changes without having to wait for federal-provincial conferences which take ages to organize or which are useless".

I might add that there has not been any federal-provincial conference on the vital issue of manpower since this government took office.

Mr. Lévesque continued by saying: "Moreover, our government can more easily enlist the co-operation of its citizens than the federal government could. This is important at a time when the issues of democratic planning and concerted action by citizens and their government take on a greater significance. Moreover, how could we possibly ensure the necessary co-operation in the socio-economic sector if, in addition to the usual problems related to co-ordinating the efforts of a large number of Quebec departments, we would also have to take into account similar initiatives and projects by the federal government? To raise the question is to answer it".

• (1555)

Those words were written by René Lévesque in 1965, when he was a Liberal minister, in his last days as a federalist.

In those days, René Lévesque thought it was possible to have some kind of arrangement with Ottawa while keeping control in Quebec. We are a people. We are a nation. In our house—our economic and social development—we cannot have two architects, two teams of engineers working their own way, with