

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.

—She said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present this motion here this morning. I would like to read to the House a motion that was adopted yesterday by the Quebec National Assembly: Yeas, 96; Nays, 0; Abstentions, 0; it was therefore unanimous, with the clearest possible consensus.

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, 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 motion adopted unanimously by the Quebec National Assembly goes on to say:

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.

Therefore, it asks the government and the Minister of Employment to immediately undertake formal discussions with the federal government in order to ensure the respect of the consensus and the promotion of the interests of the Quebec people.

Especially after the referendum vote on October 30, it is important for the government to be aware of this consensus and realize it cannot be satisfied with the guideline in this new bill, Bill C-111, in part II under the heading "Employment Benefits and National Employment Service".

• (1015)

In fact, throughout part III, what predominates is not Quebec's right to control, develop and take responsibility for its manpower policy but a renewed affirmation of the central government's primacy in this area over which Quebec has jurisdiction. All the federal government's noises about being prepared to negotiate and being open to suggestions cannot obscure a very important side to this question. Today, money collected from Quebec workers and businesses in the form of unemployment insurance premiums goes to and is controlled by the federal government.

The federal government determines under what conditions it would be prepared to agree that the government or, as appropriate—and this is something we will find in another bill we will discuss later on— agencies, individuals or any other intervenor

the government may consider would be called on to implement the measures provided in the bill.

Primarily for the sake of efficiency and also from a cultural standpoint, Quebec insists on being in charge of implementing this manpower policy, on being the only one in control and in charge of this policy. Culture is basically an expression of differences. And we know that as far as the implementation of manpower policy is concerned, countries have different ways of doing things, different objectives and different priorities. In Quebec, we do not do things the same way they do in France, Japan, the United States and the rest of Canada.

We have this consensus in the National Assembly, which was expressed in the past and confirmed again yesterday, so it is a matter of efficiency and our own culture. Why efficiency? So we can stop this endless bickering which prevents us from improving the circumstances of ordinary people whose needs are tremendous, with the unemployment rate still around 11 per cent. Of course, the unemployment rate only indicates how many people want to enter the labour market. It does not consider all those people who are discouraged, who are on welfare or are trapped somewhere without benefits of any kind and have become discouraged.

• (1020)

Given the rate of unemployment and Quebec's need for a strong and vigorous economy, it is not only unacceptable, it is downright intolerable that this issue of control over manpower is once again caught in a tug of war, which prevents ordinary folks—women, men, young people, seasonal workers—anyone with needs, from getting the most out of the services they are entitled to.

This is why, for reasons of efficiency relating to our culture, the official opposition has tabled this motion this morning, which it will speak to throughout the day.

The government has to realize the extent of the need of those it is penalizing by insisting on running the show. These people need jobs, help and a strategy. They cannot live with a system full of holes, a system that is in fact not one, but two. It is a useless system, because two governments are competing within it: one is on its own turf and the other is endlessly butting in. It has broadened the meaning of the constitutional amendment on unemployment insurance and, once again, with employees and employers' money, it is pushing aside the Government of Quebec.

The Prime Minister of Canada said, in the final days of the referendum campaign, that he would do everything to keep Canada united. Now, in an area where consensus is so strong and less than a month after October 30, the government introduces a bill that ignores the unanimous will of Quebecers. The government is acquiring the means to prevent Quebec from doing what it considers appropriate. It is giving itself the wherewithal to