

Supply

I am pleased that the assembly has agreed to negotiate. It is a first step; it is a good first step. The minister of employment for Quebec has already thrown conditions into the process, but I do not mind. I invited her over a month ago to have discussions. I am willing and open. Once we get together to form a partnership we can talk about how to bring the measures together to help those who have exhausted their benefits but want to be employed and about how we can ensure that the benefits paid out are delivered efficiently and without duplication.

Those are the real opportunities this measure opens up. It is a way of redefining how we work as governments and how we can work together. It means redefining the role of government for the individuals and giving far more responsibility, choice and hope to individuals of being able to find work. They will know there is support and they are not being left alone.

It also means an opportunity to help rebuild communities. One of the interesting developments in Quebec is that it is reorganizing down to the community level. I am doing the same in my department. We are reorganizing so that we have far more autonomy and discretion at the local, community and regional levels. If we can get together with provincial governments to agree on decentralization down to the community level, to let them make choices about the best way of employing people, we have done something very exciting. We have redefined governments in their relationships with each other, with individuals and with the community. We can provide the strength to rebuild the communities, to rebuild the employment system in Canada and to rebuild the country while we are doing it.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment, to set the record straight. Reacting to my shaking my head—it was not even something I said—the minister went off on a tangent and said that my understanding of the history of Canada and the Constitution was lacking.

I shook my head to indicate that there was nothing in the Constitution on this subject originally, although of course the minister is right, in that the provinces agreed to a constitutional amendment that gave the federal government responsibility for unemployment insurance. I want to make that clear, and I think it was in 1941. I wanted to make that clear.

The minister is intelligent, dedicated, energetic and well intentioned, and he probably wants to improve things, except when he says that the hon. member for Mercier does not listen too well. I want to appeal to his own ability to listen, because in the days to come, it seems there may be a meeting between the minister and the Quebec Minister of Employment. I hope he will go to this meeting with an open mind. In fact, I hope both parties will.

This morning, he seemed to be open to discussion. I am not the Quebec Minister of Employment. I am in the opposition here in Ottawa. I am also a member of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, and like the hon. member for Mercier, the minister's parliamentary secretary and the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, I travelled with the committee across Canada last year. I listened to people, and of course I do not share the assessment that was made of a consensus in this respect. I might remind the minister that everywhere we went, there were demonstrations, and 75 or 80 per cent of the briefs boiled down to the following: Mr. Minister, no cuts, please. That is history. But yesterday in the Quebec National Assembly, and that will be the subject of my question to the minister—

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Of the Government of Canada?

Mr. Dubé: Yes, of the Government of Canada, of course. There are some things that I, as a Quebecer, would like to say to the minister, and this morning I have the opportunity to do so. The fact is that throughout the year, throughout our travels, we saw two ways of looking at reality. The majority of Quebecers, in all parties, including the Quebec Liberal Party and the Conseil du patronat, have the same perception of reality. The people of Quebec have the same perception of reality.

The minister made it clear this morning. I am not criticizing his personal values, which dictate that the individual is entitled to insurance. I can go along with that. I heard that very often in English Canada too, I must admit. But in Quebec, as long as it was unemployment insurance, there were never any complaints. It is true that Quebec had agreed, I think it was in 1941, to have unemployment insurance come under federal jurisdiction. But since that time, especially these past few years, Quebec has been demanding control over funds allocated to unemployment insurance from the federal consolidated revenue fund for training and employability improvement services, arguing that these matters came within the same jurisdiction as education and training. There lies the source of the dispute, if you will, that has been going on for some time now, over the fact that, when the federal government takes money from the unemployment fund for training, it is meddling in a provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has surely received a copy of the resolution passed by the National Assembly. As I have been asking him since yesterday, is the minister ready to recognize Quebec's sole responsibility for labour adjustment and job training policies in Quebec, according to the unanimous wish of Liberal Party members, even those who were in the no camp in Quebec?

• (1115)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before giving the floor to the minister, I would simply remind my colleagues that all