

Supply

• (1610)

The second question concerned what principles of social equity this was based on. The provisions of the bill will go a long way to ensure there is greater equity among all Canadians. I would quote again as an example the changes from a minimum number of weeks to hours to take in part time workers.

I am not sure if I misunderstood what the hon. member said or if he misunderstood what I said. In terms of using the employment fund to reduce the deficit, I went to great lengths to say that is not in fact what the reserve will be used for. If that was his suggestion, I will say once more that the reserve in the employment insurance fund will not be used to reduce the debt and deficit. The surplus which is there will exist as a contingency. If it ever becomes large enough it will be used to reduce premiums. That would benefit both the employers and the employees which is quite an equitable solution.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, first, I want to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Champlain.

I am very pleased to participate in the debate on the motion tabled by the hon. member for Mercier, which reads:

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.

You will understand the relevance of that motion, following an almost historical event yesterday, in that a resolution was unanimously approved. Indeed, it is rare that western parliaments unanimously approve such resolutions. Yet, that was the case yesterday in Quebec City, where the three parties at the National Assembly, namely the Parti Québécois, the Liberal Party and the Action démocratique, unanimously agreed on a resolution which provides, in part, 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 for 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 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.

This is a resolution that was unanimously approved, by a vote of 96 to nil, by the three parties sitting in Quebec's National Assembly. The timing of this resolution is all the more appropriate, given a particular aspect of that reform mentioned on page 3 of the release. I am referring to the national employment service. It is said that "a modernized employment service will help jobless Canadians organize and conduct job searches. The computerized information network on the labour market will be more powerful and will tell people where they can find work in every region of the country. To that end, the implementation of an improved and universalized version of the service delivery system in Canada's human resource centres was announced in August 1995".

People in Trois-Rivières know all about the implications of that announcement. This is the other reason why I am pleased to speak today and to discuss, for the third time in the last two or three weeks, issues that plague Trois-Rivières.

• (1615)

These are linked to one of the aspects of the minister's reform and relate to the creation of a new national placement system. It will be centred on the Department of Human Resources Development employment centres, and in our area it has been decided that the regional administrative centre, the focal point of departmental activities in our region, will be located, not where it would normally and naturally be, in Trois-Rivières, the regional capital which I have the honour to represent, but in Shawinigan instead.

This is, of course, a worthy city as well, one which knew glory in the days of natural resources development by the Shawinigan Water and Power, and is now represented as best he can by the hon. member for Saint-Maurice, the Prime Minister of Canada. The decision was made at the Department of Human Resources Development to have Shawinigan be the one to benefit from the regional administrative centre, instead of Trois-Rivières.

The question remains—since we are totally in the dark as to the reasons for this decision—was this a technocratic decision or a political one? If technocratic, it is confirmation of all of the public's prejudices against the judgment of technocrats in their ivory towers, away from life's realities, away from the grass-roots, making decisions among themselves in comfort and behind closed doors. They hold meeting after meeting at which they convince one another of how justified their decisions are, without ever really worrying about whether those decisions are in the least bit rational.

If this is a technocratic decision, then we must condemn it out of hand, because it is based on absolutely nothing rational. I will offer you proof very shortly that it even contradicts the parameters set by the department itself.