

Unemployment Insurance Act

[Translation]

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House this evening to speak to Bill C-21, even if it is already 11.40 p.m. and today happens to be my 20th wedding anniversary. However, my wife said I could work late.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to the House.

Bill C-21 is adapted to the 1990s. It is adapted to today's needs.

Since 1984, this Government has been working very hard and very sensibly on training and job creation programs. Since 1984, we have created 1,500,000 new jobs in Canada. This proves our Government is doing the right thing, and I can assure you that Bill C-21 is a piece of legislation that will pursue this sensible approach, as we said during the 1988 election campaign.

• (2340)

I want to congratulate the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mrs. McDougall) who this legislation has given a new stimulus to job creation, and I will explain why in a moment. Canadians want to work. Canadians don't want to be on the pogy and they don't want to be on welfare. Earlier, I heard the Minister for Saint-Laurent say that only 2 per cent—

An Hon. Member: The Member!

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil): The Hon. Member for Saint-Laurent (Mrs. Maheu) told us only 2 per cent of the unemployed did not want to work and were constantly shifting from unemployment to employment and would rather be on the pogy than work. However, 2 per cent of the unemployed equals \$1.1 billion the federal Government can save. And I think these people don't deserve to be on the pogy. As a Conservative Member, I say that is very important and I think it is worth considering.

Mr. Speaker, for better or for worse, we are part of a system that is undergoing major technological changes. I say for better or for worse, and unfortunately, jobs are being lost as result of advanced technological change, but on the plus side, we need more highly qualified workers.

I will give you an example of administrative jobs. Typists are often replaced by computers or word proces-

sors, and of course these jobs have to be replaced. But where? Is there any connection? There is, in that computers have to be manufactured.

However, different skills are needed to build and manufacture computers. That is why we have to retrain people who need jobs, and the problem also appears in the manufacturing sector. In plants, machines are replaced by robots, lathes are replaced by computer-operated lathes, and so forth.

This advanced technology enables Canadians to have a better quality of life, but it also has a number of drawbacks. As I said earlier, we must adjust to these realities in our present society.

Bill C-21 enhances our quality of life. We are all proud of the fact that we can earn a decent living, and our pride arises from the work we do.

Mr. Speaker, Canadian markets and international markets are becoming more and more open, and that is a fact of life. We are experiencing problems from time to time, and that is because to a certain extent we have to do business with countries like Japan, the Common Market, Korea and many other countries. If we want to continue to sell our products and compete with the rest of the world we need highly skilled labour so we will be in a position to produce goods at competitive prices, otherwise our market will be flooded with foreign products. It stands to reason that Canadians will go for products available at the best possible prices. It is therefore imperative that our workers be able to face the challenge and turn out good products.

Free trade with the Americans has to be the best opportunity Canadians have ever had. Take the Montreal region, for example, and draw an 800-kilometre circle around Montreal or Longueuil and you have a population of 75 million consumers, 75 million people who would buy Canadian products, particularly products made in the Montreal region. Imagine the opportunities which free trade affords us to sell our products and to create jobs. We will be able to create hundreds of thousands of jobs. But, again, only on the condition that we can compete. We will be competitive if our workers are properly trained. And it is for that purpose that Bill C-21 is aimed at retraining our workers with a view to providing business and industry with competent employees.