

Supply

I would like to ask my colleague from Québec-Est if he could tell me what the government has done to help the 1.5 million Canadians who are unemployed to get back to work.

I may be mistaken but in my mind one of the highest unemployment rates in the country is in Quebec. I would like the hon. member to tell me, besides his continual spin that it is the Liberals' fault, what he proposes to do about the situation in Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tremblay (Québec-Est): Mr. Speaker, I just want to repeat what I said earlier, that when we took office, the coffers were empty. I was from an international accounting firm where I acted as a bankruptcy trustee for many companies. I would never have thought that we would have as big a job as we were left with in 1984, which involved turning around a whole country.

The initiatives that we have put forward, without any help from the opposition unfortunately, were difficult to implement. Today, after all these years of effort, we see some very concrete results. We have inflation and interest rates under control. We just learned, as I said in my speech, that unemployment has gone down nearly 1 per cent recently and is the lowest it has been in a year. I know full well that much remains to be done, but let us be optimistic. The hard work we have done and the unpopular measures we have taken during the past nine years are bearing fruit and this will be even more evident in the coming months.

[*English*]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us condemns the government for its policies that have stifled economic growth, destroyed Canadian jobs and exacerbated the recession.

Each time we raise this question with the ministers of the government, as we did today when I asked the Prime Minister and the Acting Minister of Finance what they were going to do about the large numbers of unemployed in this country. I referred to Montreal where the official rate of unemployment is 14 per cent. However, if one looks at those who have dropped out of the labour force the actual figure is 27 per cent with 21 per cent of Montreal families living under the poverty line.

• (1740)

Each time that we ask the government to do something about this the answer we get is a comparison with the recession of 1981-82. What comfort does that give the 1.5 million Canadians who are unemployed? What comfort does that give Canadians whose children are unemployed? What comfort does that give Canadians whose husbands and wives are unemployed?

Would it have been appropriate for us in 1981-82 when we were asked about the recession at that time to simply compare it with the Great Depression of 1932-37? No. That would be completely ridiculous. As a matter of fact we tried to deal with the recession in 1981-82. We believed the government had a role. As a matter of fact the things we did finally brought us out of that recession in 1983-84.

However, we did not use the cheap put-down of simply comparing the recession of 1981-82 to the Great Depression of 1932-37 which was under Conservative government, which happened under the R.B. Bennett government. We did not do that.

It is equally ridiculous and gives no comfort to the 1.5 million Canadians, who are unemployed, that are officially unemployed, to get that kind of ridiculous answer from the government.

When we ask these kinds of questions the government says: "We have put forward solutions to the unemployment problem, but you voted against them in the House of Commons". Of course we voted against the free trade agreement. We tried to convince Canadians that it was wrong. The government was re-elected nevertheless and it rammed through the free trade agreement. Yes, we voted against it and time has shown that now this has cost Canadians jobs. It was not the solution to the problem of Canadian unemployment.

Yes, we voted against the goods and services tax. Expert after expert, even those who were in favour of the goods and services tax, said that even if it was the right thing to do in the long run, the government was introducing it at a time of recession and that would exacerbate the recession. However, the government went ahead anyway and yes, we voted against it.

We are going to vote against the \$6 billion helicopter proposals. We will vote against the unemployment insurance changes which are reducing unemployment insur-