

Supply

I will simply remind my hon. colleague that 400,000 jobs are presently vacant with no one to fill them for lack of training, of adequate training that is. I will also remind him that we have 1,500,000 unemployed people in this country. So, can he make a serious commitment to put everything having to do with manpower training, duplication and overlap in the hands of the provinces so to speak, to allow surpluses to be made and millions of dollars to be set aside to help our young people to create, to be creators instead of mere welfare recipients? Is he prepared to admit or submit to his government that job training should come under provincial jurisdiction?

Mr. Simmons: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend from Chicoutimi, a man of great vision and foresight, the first person to recognize my skills and qualifications for the Quebec national theatre.

[English]

Despite the member's opening remarks about my parity and so on, I am sure what I was doing did not escape him at all. In effect I was saying practice what you preach and preach what you practice.

• (1535)

In the opposition's document of last fall there were only two fleeting references to unemployment and both related to past or current events. Neither gave any indication nor any inking as to what the Parti Québécois would like to see done insofar as the issue is concerned. It is difficult to preach to others if one does not have the solution. That was the thesis of what I was attempting to say. If I said it badly I apologize to my good friend from Chicoutimi.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Madam Speaker, as always the hon. member for Burin—St. George's said what he wished to say eloquently. It is absolutely amazing how he is able to say so little but so well. I applaud the hon. member.

As this is such an exceptionally serious topic that we are debating today and the hon. member knows so well that his home province, of all the provinces, suffers the most from unemployment, could he say something about having the portability of labour across the country that includes Quebec so that people from all parts of this country can go wherever they want to find employment?

Mr. Simmons: Madam Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from Edmonton Southwest.

Let me first address his concern about my style of speaking. Newfoundlanders in the foyer at a funeral tell jokes. That does not mean they are glad the guy is dead. That means they have a very particular way of dealing with an issue. If we can get a message across with a bit of humour or relieve a situation with humour we do it. Whether it works is for others to judge.

However, the subject is deadly serious. I can give the member an example that we have chafed under for a long time in Newfoundland. If the member knows the border between Labrador and Quebec he will know that there are two communities, one called Labrador City just east of the border and one called Fermont, Quebec just to the west, 12 miles from Labrador City. The person who lives in Fermont can drive down and work in the drug store or the shop in Labrador City, as she does and has for many years, but the son of the guy who owns that store cannot get a job in Fermont, Quebec. That has gone on there for many years. That is wrong.

The lack of labour mobility across this country is wrong and discriminatory. It has caused a fight between Ontario and Quebec recently. I concur completely with my colleague that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Resuming debate, The hon. member for Durham.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham): Madam Speaker, it is always a great delight to follow my hon. colleague, the member for Burin—St. George's.

Concerning this motion brought forward by the hon. member for Mercier, lack of vision and lack of concrete measures relating to jobs, I have to speak against it.

I want to talk about unemployment. Unemployment in this House has been regarded as something bad, something unfortunate, something systemic of our capitalist society and something that is wrong about where we are going in our life.

I would like to give a little history lesson, going back to the 17th century when people did not understand the concept of unemployment, when people worked seven days a week and basically dropped dead from work. There was no such thing as unemployment. They had to survive by working day in and day out.

By the 19th century we were into the industrial revolution. Things were not necessarily any better but there was a better standard of living. People started to live longer. By the time we got to the 20th century and the Second World War we discovered that we had developed all kinds of new technologies, all kinds of things that made our businesses and our lifestyles more liveable. We discovered that we did not have to work the long hours we did in the past.

• (1540)

Around that same time the labour force participation rate in Canada went up. In other words, more people, mainly females, joined the workforce. We had a huge increase in the supply of labour, all at the same time that our technologies were becoming innovative.

Now we are abreast with the 21st century. This is a knowledge based society. New technology has come to the fore: computers, computer graphics, laser technology, all kinds of new innovations that have made this the knowledge based society.