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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, April 18, 1996

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 18, 1996

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to seven petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Marcel Massé (for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-27, an act to amend the Criminal Code (child prostitution, child sex tourism, criminal harassment and female genital mutilation).

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

* * *

[English]

COMPETITION ACT

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-266, an act to amend the Competition Act (protection of whistle-blowers).

He said: Madam Speaker, I stand today to introduce a bill entitled an act to amend the Competition Act (protection of whistle-blowers). This bill is about consumer protection, the right and protection of employees who refuse to partake in illegal anti-competitive activities sponsored by their employers which hurt the consumer. It is about improving the investigation and

prosecution of companies that engage in price fixing and price gouging.

Consumers continue to be victimized by market-wide fluctuations in the price of gasoline. Both levels of government say that they sympathize with consumers but add they cannot prove price fixing. Consumers know that price fixing exists and demand that governments stand up to protect their interests. This bill provides us with the evidence gathering tools needed to expose how gas prices are really set and put an end to the practice of gouging the consumer at the pumps.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

* * *

COMPETITION ACT

Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-267, an act to amend the Competition Act (gasoline pricing).

He said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see that my colleague moved a similar motion to mine before I had an opportunity to present this bill.

The bill amends the Competition Act to require oil companies to give 30-days' notice of any increase in the price at which they sell gasoline to gasoline retail distributors if the increase is more than 1 per cent.

Such notice is to be given to the minister responsible for enforcing the act and shall include the effective date of the price increase and the reason or reasons for it.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

* * *

• (1010)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***BANK ACT**

The House resumed from April 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, an act to amend, enact and repeal certain laws relating to financial institutions, be read the third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): All those in favour will please say ye.

Some hon. members: Ye.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Call in the members.

And the division bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Pursuant to Standing Order 76(8), the recorded division on the motion stands deferred until Monday.

* * *

*[English]***DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT ACT**

Hon. Marcel Massé (for the Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.) moved that Bill C-11, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development and to amend and repeal certain related acts, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words about Bill C-11, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development.

The purpose of this bill is to ask Parliament to formalize the existence of the new department, which has already shown itself to be a pragmatic, efficient and effective entity. There is no hidden agenda here which will disappoint some of my friends in the Reform Party. It is business as usual.

Mr. Stinson: You can fool some of the people some of the time but not all the people all of the time.

Mr. Simmons: The member is standing proof of that.

The bill confirms the minister's responsibility to develop the human resources that fall under the mandate of the Government of Canada. It does nothing to extend or to diminish the minister's powers, nor does the legislation introduce any substantive changes to government policies or programs.

As members will know, the government is committed to an effective and efficient operation.

• (1015)

At the time of structuring it was realized that encompassing all human resources in one department would better serve the needs of Canadians. To that end, Labour Canada is now part of human resources. The bill provides for the appointment of a minister of labour. However, so there is no confusion, appointment of a minister of labour does not in any way mean further reorganization of the department.

During the current restructuring of the Canadian economy the government is placing a high priority on issues such as labour relations, occupational safety and health and workplace standards as well as other issues that have a profound effect on Canada's labour markets.

These concerns are in keeping with the Government of Canada's responsibility for labour relations in several key areas which are under federal jurisdiction, including transportation, banking and communications. As well, the government is signatory to a number of international labour agreements, hence the need for a role under this department.

It is the responsibility of the Minister of Labour to ensure these issues receive the attention they deserve. With that in mind, modernization of the Canadian Labour Code is one of Labour Canada's key undertakings.

Prior to the reorganization of the government, employment and immigration came under the same roof. That is no longer the case with this new bill and this new department.

The former Canada Employment and Immigration Commission will become the Canada Employment Insurance Commission, and the commission will continue its mandate with regard to policies affecting employment, labour market conditions and revitalization of the unemployment insurance program.

That brings me to an issue I particularly want to address under the aegis of this bill. This is not a bill particularly about employ-

ment insurance. It is a bill about a department that has responsibility for the proposals now making their way through the system. Within a few days the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development will report to the House on its recommendations concerning the proposals tabled on December 1 by the now Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I have said many times publicly that I believe these proposals constitute an overall improvement in what we have had in terms of employment insurance. However, there have been some concerns expressed by my constituents and by people in Atlantic Canada generally, including by me.

I have expressed concerns and continue to have concerns about the so-called intensity rule, punishing people who through no fault of their own must have more frequent access to unemployment insurance benefits than other people. It is a fact of life. It is a characteristic of this country that there are a number of industries which by definition are seasonal, resource extractions certainly being in that category.

Although not exclusively, the Atlantic provinces are very much identified with these types of industries; mineral extraction in Labrador and parts of the island of Newfoundland and other parts of Atlantic Canada, and forestry and fishery. All three of these have seasonal implications.

What would the country be today without access to the vast resources of Atlantic Canada? I submit that the manufacturing complex of central Canada would be less vibrant without the resource sectors of other parts of the country.

For these reasons and for others we have never made any apology about the seasonal nature of our work activity. While we make no apologies, we wish it were otherwise in terms of the individuals concerned. If we gave any people in my riding, and I suspect I reflect the views of elsewhere in Atlantic Canada, the choice between unemployment insurance benefits and full time, 12 month work, they would take the latter.

• (1020)

It bears repeating because people who have not lived the experience in Atlantic Canada tend to generalize. There is still a generalization out there that Newfoundlanders and Atlantic Canadians are a bunch of lazy people who work for ten weeks so they can get their stamps and sit around drinking beer for the other 42 weeks.

An hon. member: Get rid of the GST and create jobs.

Mr. Simmons: Do not change the issue. I want to focus on this one.

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That stereotype is thrown at me from time to time. The truth is there are more native born Newfoundlanders living outside Newfoundland today than living in Newfoundland. There are 579,000 people in Newfoundland and there are over 700,000 Newfoundlanders living outside Newfoundland.

They have left Newfoundland, almost without exception, to chase jobs. They are good workers. They have good work ethics. We find them on the CP tracks in Saskatchewan or on the tar sands project in Fort McMurray in great numbers.

There are thousands of them working on the Great Lakes. In my constituency alone there are more than 8,000 Newfoundlanders who sail the Great Lakes six to eight months a year. They go home for a week or a month to stay with their families and then they return to their work. They work in the forestry industry in Nova Scotia. They make up a disproportionately large percentage of the Canadian Armed Forces. Newfoundlanders have gone elsewhere because that is where the work is. I have digressed to make a point.

I was talking about some of the concerns I have with the employment insurance legislation. One has to do with the intensity rule. Another has to do with the method of determining benefits, the so-called divisor method. I have made my views known to the appropriate people, including those on the committee.

Eligibility rules for new entrants is another concern.

Another concern is the clawback after \$39,000. I have said to both the minister and to members of the committee we have to be careful that in applying that clawback we do not unwittingly introduce a disincentive. If time allowed I would give the House a few examples. However, if members look closely at the proposal they will find that the clawback, as laudable as it seems at the moment, has a disincentive built into it. There are circumstances where it is worth the person's while, in strict financial terms, to sit at home rather than to earn too much money because by so doing they would adversely affect their level of benefits down the road.

I had another concern about the hearings which are concluding today. As far as Newfoundland is concerned, it is the province with the highest rate of unemployment in all of Canada. Yet when the all-party committee decided to call witnesses it called only three from Newfoundland. What is more, all three witnesses were business people. They were from the St. John's Board of Trade and those kinds of groups. They have their point of view, but it is the point of view of the employer. If we are to have an equitable employment insurance scheme when this is all over we ought to have the input of not only the employer but the employee.

In the case of Newfoundland, the committee was to hear three witnesses from the employer side and not a single witness from the worker side. That was changed at the last minute, not completely to my satisfaction, but at least we got the Newfoundland and Labrador

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Federation of Labour on the list at the last minute. The decision was made to hear that group this week. There ought to have been others to provide more of a balance.

In fairness to my colleagues on the committee from all parties, I understand that in general if we look at the mix of witnesses who have appeared before the committee from across the country there has been a balance of both worker and employer representation. As far as Newfoundland is concerned, that balance was not reflected. I put that on the record.

I digressed a bit, but nevertheless I wanted to speak generally on the issue of this bill and one of the current active files of the new department, the employment insurance proposal.

• (1025)

I thought I would give my friend the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Stinson: No, I was listening to you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I might be able to provide an opportunity for that member to speak at a later time.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I assure my friend from Okanagan—Shuswap and all other hon. members there is complete harmony between overall government priorities and the priorities of the new Department of Human Resources Development.

As the government made abundantly clear in the throne speech, the policies of the government are aimed at fostering a healthy economic climate, and we are beginning to see some signs of that. Look at the indicators, interest rates, foreign exchange, the trade balance and so on. I think we are on the right road but we are not there yet.

Mr. Stinson: Bankruptcies.

Mr. Simmons: The member wants to talk about bankruptcies. Nobody takes any comfort in the alarmingly high number of personal and corporate bankruptcies in the country. He might want to look at a correlation between the number of personal bankruptcies and the applications of right wing policies. The two go hand in hand. We cannot in one breath decry the number of bankruptcies and in the next keep saying “sock it to them, sock it to them”. The two are related.

I remember from grade seven a delightful poem from the old beckoning trail of literature, that blue beckoning trail. It was called “The Big Rock Candy Mountains.” The basic thesis of the poem was that everything was free. One of the lines was “prison walls were made of paper and cigarettes grew on trees”. I think for the writer cigarettes were supposed to be a kind of morsel to be sought after. The context of the poem was that everything was free, you did not have to pay for anything at all.

My friend from Okanagan—Shuswap said get rid of the tax. Theoretically a government could get rid of all taxes. However, certain consequences would follow. We would not be able to pay the member’s salary.

Mr. Stinson: That would be fine with me. You would not get your pension. If we did not need government, that would be a beauty.

Mr. Simmons: Now is he upset. Now is he listening with his lips. He suddenly realizes that if we cut out all the taxes it might impact on him.

Mr. Stinson: I would be able to do something useful.

Mr. Simmons: No party in the House, whatever its stripe and however loud its members yell, said if it were elected there would be no taxes.

An hon. member: Some said they would eliminate the GST.

• (1030)

Mr. Simmons: If they want, we can talk about some, including the leader of the Reform Party, who said one thing during the election and about three or four things since on the GST.

I have my other speech here. I wanted to give it the day the opposition had the motion on the GST but we ran out of time. I will give my GST speech at the right time. I will lay out how consistent the leader of the Reform Party has been on the subject of the GST. His basic speech goes like this: Get rid of it, keep it, get rid of it, keep it, get rid of it, keep it. That is basically what the gentleman who is the leader of the third party has said on that issue.

If they want to talk about GST, I believe Mr. Johnny Cochrane has something he would like to say.

Mr. Stinson: That is the Liberal two step. We are all used to that.

Mr. Hart: What did John Nunziata say?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bellehumeur: Talk to the Speaker, not to the Reformers. He has nothing to say.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Colleagues, with the greatest of respect to all members in the Chamber, I would hope that the interventions would be made through the Chair. Of course the Chair by virtue of our rules can only recognize one speaker at a time.

In this case, in accordance with Standing Order 74 the first three speakers have 40 minutes without questions or comments. By unanimous consent, if you choose you can ask questions of the

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member speaking. In the meantime if it goes on during the discourse of his speech obviously we will all have to question as to how much order we might have in this Chamber.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I might have missed something. I understood I had the right to refer to other members of the House. Each time I have done so, I have done it in the third person by their riding name. If the member for Berthier—Montcalm, our very own Johnny Cochrane, has any problems with that he should rise on a point of order.

If my colleagues from the Reform want to interject, and I am not objecting to it, I understand that is within the spirit of debate in this House. If I need the protection of the Chair from the member for Berthier—Montcalm I should be the first to beg for it, but I did not think I was out of order. If I did not refer to the Chair when I should have, I apologize, but I thought in all cases I referred to the Chair in the third person.

If the Chair gets waylaid by Johnny Cochrane, that is the Chair's problem, not mine. In any event I will try and do it another way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It is obviously not my purpose nor my role to engage in debate. I assure you I will defend the interests of the Chair if it should ever be required on behalf of each and every member of the House. This is not a point that is related to any specific member. I am just in a very general way asking for the co-operation of all the members in the Chamber to make their interventions through the Chair and not directly across the floor to one another.

Mr. Simmons: My comment was not directly aimed at the Chair either. It was just to say, Sir, that I thought I was doing exactly that and I asked the Chair if I had strayed somewhere to let me know where it was.

I was trying to assure all the hon. members, the agitated ones and otherwise, that the government and the new department are in complete harmony, as John Crosbie used to say, cheek to cheek, jowl to jowl on this one in terms of the mandate of the government as a whole, its overall priority and the priority of the new department. The throne speech made that clear. I was then digressing in talking about how the economy is in slightly healthier shape than it has been and it is moving along. It is not there yet, but it is moving along.

When I began to talk about how good things were beginning to get, that made my friends in the Reform Party a little nervous and they decided to throw, as we would say in Newfoundland, a red herring into the process and started talking about the GST and that kind of thing. At that point I pointed out to the member that if we cut out all those taxes we could not pay his salary. That is when he had the tantrum and that is where we were when we had the procedural interruptions. Now we can go on from there.

I have a speech. I am on page eight of the speech. I have not read the first seven yet but I am on page eight.

• (1035)

I want to tell the Reform member that page eight begins as follows: "That too is HRDC's number one priority". We have to go back to page seven to find out what "that too" refers to. Aha, "fostering a healthy climate", where I came in just a minute ago. That is clearly HRDC's number one priority. Let him debate that. It is that and maintaining a strong social security system for all Canadians. These are the two priorities of this new department: the healthy economic situation which translates into jobs, jobs, jobs and maintaining a strong social security system for Canadians.

To fulfil those two objectives, the new department is continually developing policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and to help unemployed workers return to the labour force as quickly as possible.

By making the development of all human resources the responsibility of one department, it facilitates an integrated, co-ordinated approach to help Canadians achieve their full potential. It also provides a structure for the Government of Canada to work with its provincial and territorial partners, its partners in business and labour, its partners in the educational institutions and its partners in the community.

HRDC is bringing together the very strands of our social programs to ensure that they meet the needs of individual Canadians and the nation as a whole. Social policy is about investing in people, helping people develop their skills, helping them enjoy rewarding lives and becoming contributing members of their respective communities. Nowhere does HRDC emphasize that policy more than with our youth.

We all recall that creating hope and opportunity for young Canadian men and women was one of the key goals singled out in the speech from the throne. Youth unemployment, Canadians under 25, is around 16 per cent, which is just more than one and one-half times the national average.

I am sure every member of this House will agree that Canadian youth are the nation's greatest resource. They need and deserve our assistance to complete their education and attain that crucial first job. That reason alone justifies creating the Department of Human Resources Development.

HRD is responsible for administering youth services Canada, youth internship Canada, the student summer job action program and the Canada student loans program. I trust that hon. members can clearly see the key roles the department plays in the lives of young people across the country.

By amalgamating all the programs that address human resources, by providing a single, coherent mandate, the government is clarifying the identity and responsibilities of the new department. This is extremely important for the morale of the depart-

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ment's employees and more important for the confidence of its clients across the country.

Through further consolidation of social and labour market programs, HRDC will sharpen the government's focus on developing Canada's human resources. Part of that can be seen in the department's responsibility for the reform of the unemployment insurance program. UI is being renewed to address 1990s realities through both income support and active employment measures.

As I was saying earlier, that reform is long overdue. I support the overall thrust of that reform of unemployment insurance. I have said earlier in my speech today that I have certain concerns about particular aspects: the claw back, the intensity, the divisor and the entrance requirements particularly for new entrants. These are matters that have been canvassed pretty fully with the new Minister of Human Resources Development, my friend from New Brunswick, and also with members of the standing committee which will report very soon. We will then have an opportunity to see what amendments are going to be made to the proposal.

• (1040)

Based on my conversations with the minister and members of the standing committee, I am confident the concerns which I and others have raised on this issue have been heard and are being dealt with. I think we will see that reflected in the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development. The net result is we will have a considerably improved employment insurance scheme over that which was tabled in December by the former minister.

Canadians need and deserve the best possible services from their government which is the crux of Bill C-11. Canadians will get those services through many HRDC initiatives, not the least of which will be the department's new service delivery network. At the heart of the new network will be about 300 human resources centres, now known as Canada Employment Centres, spread strategically across the country. The centres will provide a broad cross-section of client services.

The establishment of Human Resources Development Canada is absolutely necessary if the government is to fulfil its mandate of generating economic growth, job creation and protecting social security programs.

I can only repeat what I said at the beginning that Bill C-11 is essentially an administrative bill. There is nothing earth shattering here. There are no new mandates being asked for, given or taken back. The bill does not deal with substantive issues of reform but with consequential issues arising from the efficient merger of various departments and programs. For that reason I encourage members to support passage of the legislation which would enable HRDC and the government to get on with the task of better serving Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite all of the government's denials and its repetitive tune that it is only a technical bill to establish a department, Bill C-96 in fact broadens the federal government's constitutionally recognized powers.

Bill C-96 broadens the powers assumed by the federal government through its power to spend. For the first time, what the government did in fact do is spelled out on each line of the bill as well as between the lines.

In fact, by establishing this new Department of Human Resources Development, the government eloquently confirms its takeover of the responsibilities and powers that originally lay at the core of provincial accountability under the Canadian Constitution. This core of provincial accountability was undermined only by exceptions that should have been enshrined in the Constitution, be it pensions or unemployment insurance.

• (1045)

Once its foot was in the door, the government threw the door wide open and, through its ever growing spending powers, invaded the place. That is what Bill C-11 is all about.

This bill clearly expresses the centralizing will of a federal government that tries to pass itself off as the chief strategist on human resources development in Canada. It would take over the management, in the broad sense of the word, of the vast area of human resources development.

In a transformed Canada, we can understand the other provinces agreeing to different constitutional arrangements. The problem is that, for Quebec, these arrangements are totally unacceptable; we cannot in any way agree to the wording of Bill C-11 without going against all the constitutional debates that have kept so many generations of Quebecers awake at night.

We respect the fact that the other provinces and the federal government may make different arrangements. Quebec, however, cannot in any way agree to let the federal government assume full control over the area of human resources development, which, in a broad sense, touches on all aspects of social life, including training, youth—as my colleague across the way just pointed out—seniors, children, women, the unemployed and the people with jobs. The fact that it had been made very clear, in an award of the Privy Council for instance, that labour relations comes under the jurisdiction of the provinces did not stop the government from interfering to an extent that considerably exceeded its powers in an area which is the very heart of labour relations, addressing issues such as the hours of work and work week reduction in a study it recently commissioned.

Again, we have no problem with the other provinces looking to make other arrangements, but Quebec, through its deliberating bodies and institutions, unanimously rejected this bill.

Had Kim Campbell, who was the Prime Minister of Canada for a short time, not amalgamated under the same umbrella several social-oriented departments, the federal government would not be in the situation it is today. Probably preparing to launch the kind of reform the Liberal government is carrying out now, former Prime Minister Campbell had acted according to her senior officials' recommendations. I take it that they are the ones who develop policy, because the government has changed but policy has remained the same.

After the former Prime Minister merged several departments, the Liberal government, instead of straightening things out, started where the Conservatives had left off when they were voted out of office, very shortly after the merger took place. It is important to mention this connection.

• (1050)

By merging different departments, none of which had originally been given the powers set out in this act, which was only supposed to make them into one department, the government had the means to carry out its proposed social reform, now abandoned I guess, but whose few aspects that did get implemented certainly hint at the direction the government is taking and will continue to follow.

It is a good idea to read over the main clauses, which caused all the organizations and institutions concerned in Quebec to object. Clause 6 reads as follows:

6. The powers, duties and functions of the Minister extend to and include all matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction relating to the development of the human resources of Canada not by law assigned to any other Minister, department, board or agency of the Government of Canada, and are to be exercised with the objective of enhancing employment, encouraging equality and promoting social security.

It is understandable that a country may have a problem with the provinces claiming that they have such powers when the central government claims to have the same powers. This is a mess that clearly shows how inefficient Canada is in these areas as compared to other other countries.

This next clause speaks volumes:

For the purpose of facilitating the formulation, coordination and implementation of any program or policy relating to the powers, duties and functions referred to in section 6, the Minister may enter into agreements with a province—

But does it stop there? No. Earlier bills did provide that the minister could enter into agreements with a province. This makes sense.

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However, it goes on to say “or a group of provinces”. This too makes sense, but again it should be possible for a province that pulls out get compensation for the funds that it would otherwise be denied. As you can see, this is the stuff of constitutional debates. And I read on: “agencies of provinces, financial institutions and such other persons or bodies as the Minister considers appropriate”.

This clause is far reaching. It indicates the government's firm intention to exercise the power to plan, organize, and control, in other words to manage the human resources development in Canada.

I will read another clause, which complements this one, before moving on to the consequences.

The Commission shall exercise such powers and perform such duties and functions

(a) in relation to unemployment insurance, employment services and the development and utilization of labour market resources, as are required by the Minister or by or pursuant to an Act of Parliament;

Apart from the twisted French, which talks about maximizing human means—as opposed to inhuman means, perhaps—there is much twisting of the Constitution.

(b) in relation to other matters, as are required by order of the Governor in Council or by or pursuant to an Act of Parliament.

In short, the unemployment commission can get any power it wants besides those included in its original constituent act, because it is being changed.

With this bill, the federal government will have the means to pursue a centralizing policy, in spite of the soothing remarks made, among others, by the youngest and newest minister, recently sent to the House in a byelection, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartier-ville.

• (1055)

Reading the description of the main elements of this bill, one can understand why Quebec institutions, agencies, and bodies are very strongly opposed to this measure. It was to be expected.

On the union front, for instance, a communiqué issued by Henri Massé, the secretary-general of the Quebec federation of labour, reads as follows: “We do not want Ottawa to interfere any longer in this issue or to ignore us in setting parallel structures. Quebec has set up its own preferred partnership structure in that sector, the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre. There is a broad consensus to the effect that Quebec must have sole responsibility over work force adaptation and vocational training policies on its territory, and must consequently patriate the federal budgets allocated to these programs. Even the Conseil du patronat agrees with the unions”.

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A release from the Canadian Institute of Adult Education reads as follows: "With this bill, the federal government shows a blatant lack of respect for the aspirations of the provinces, particularly those of Quebec in the fields of education and manpower training and development. Indeed, clauses 6 and 20 of the bill—the ones I quoted—leave absolutely no doubt as to the centralizing intentions of the federal government in these sectors".

The Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre, which includes all the major partners in Quebec, also strongly condemned this bill.

This is not the first time that the central government attempts to set up a structure in that sector that is similar to the one put in place by Quebec. The federalist Liberal government of Robert Bourassa, through its manpower minister, Mr. Bourbeau, corresponded with Mr. Valcourt who, at the time, wanted to reach various groups and organizations through such a network by awarding lucrative contracts, in an attempt to invade Quebec's jurisdiction.

Mr. Bourbeau who, as I said, is a federalist, strongly opposed such an idea. He said, in 1991: "Quebec does indeed recognize the crying need for it to define its own manpower policies, to establish its priorities with respect to manpower development in close conjunction with its partners in the labour market, and then to set up programs tailored to the needs it has set as priorities and to manage them through an agency that would call for input from those partners".

Mr. Bourbeau continues: "Already, Mrs. McDougall—who was Mr. Valcourt's predecessor—would have liked the Government of Quebec to negotiate an agreement with the federal government, in line with the Canadian labour force development strategy. Personally, I have asked that bilateral negotiations be conducted, in the hope that they would lead to an administrative arrangement under which the federal government would have transferred to Quebec the budgets that it normally allocates to manpower programs, including the moneys taken from the unemployment insurance fund, which come from the contributions of employers and workers". Mr. Bourbeau is referring to correspondence that was exchanged before 1991. What did Mrs. McDougall answer? Barbara McDougall indicated that the federal government was linking Quebec's claims with what? With the constitutional review process.

• (1100)

This exchange of correspondence forms the very substance of Bill C-11. The current federal government, instead of respecting Quebec's will, is proceeding unilaterally like none of the previous governments had dared to.

They indeed followed in the steps of the Conservatives, but they did even worse, like in many areas such as in the reform of social programs.

Further on, what does Mr. Bourbeau say about the groups, organizations or persons with whom the central government wanted to enter into agreements? He says this: "I understand now that the employment and immigration commission has decided not to follow up on the agreements I had made with the previous holder of the employment and immigration portfolio. Indeed, your commission is offering to so-called co-ordination groups grants for all kinds of projects directly or indirectly related to manpower training. Those co-ordination groups are employer associations, community groups, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, educational institutions."

He adds: "These projects are questionable. These initiatives, contrary to the commitments made, contribute to creating new groups or to expanding the mandate of existing groups". And he concludes: "This is doing indirectly what the government had made a commitment not to do directly".

He adds further on: "All objective observers find that Canada and Quebec are falling disturbingly behind compared with our main competitors". That was in 1991; we are now in 1996, and the Liberal federal government, instead of dealing with the problem and solving it, keeps on procrastinating, even after the referendum where, short of 52,000 votes only, Quebec did not achieve sovereignty.

The general outcry in Quebec, far from being surprising, is the result of a historical movement that cannot be stopped. However, how did the human resources development committee react to these pressures from Quebec? Let me give you an example. I asked that major institutions, major representatives of Quebec be heard on this issue. The committee refused. What groups were these? The Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre, which includes representatives of the business sector, unions, citizens' committees, municipalities and government. The Canadian Institute of Adult Education was another. The Quebec employment development minister also asked to appear before the committee, and labour organizations, the Association des manufacturiers du Québec, the Fédération des professeurs d'université, the Mouvement Desjardins, among others, have made the same request. The committee refused.

At the second reading stage, I moved an amendment in the House which said this: "That all words following the word 'That' be deleted and replaced with the following: 'this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-96, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development and to amend and repeal certain related acts, because the principle of the bill includes no provision requiring the minister, as part of that person's powers, to award full and entire financial compensation to any province wishing to exercise, fully and alone, jurisdiction over human resources development'"

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• (1105)

Had the government been willing to send a positive message in the aftermath of the referendum, it was easy to do so. It could have recognized in this bill the right to opt out in this matter which is constitutional in nature as I have demonstrated.

The new throne speech, the one delivered on February 27, does not leave any doubt about the intent of the government. What does the Prime Minister say in the throne speech? "The government will not use its spending power to create new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction without the consent of a majority of the provinces". Any new program will be designed so that non-participating provinces will be compensated, provided they establish equivalent or comparable initiatives in a provincial area of jurisdiction". Is that what the so-called spirit of decentralization of this central government is all about?

Given the way this bill was drafted and designed, it cannot be effectively amended, since it deals with constitutional issues, except through the amendment that we put forward at second reading and that was negated by a majority in the House.

We are dealing here with an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, but the government flatly refuses to recognize this exclusive jurisdiction. It is turning its spending power into a legal and legislative power in order to interfere without considering the rights of the provinces. Nowhere in the various acts establishing the former departments that were consolidated was the right of the central government to reach agreements with stakeholders other than the provinces recognized. There is something in the vocational training legislation, but the government only undertakes to consult the provinces, nothing more.

That augurs ill. Despite its expressed will to recognize the right of the provinces, the federal government is giving itself a lot of leeway in the bill concerning unemployment insurance reform, except in one very narrow area, that is the vocational training field, which is already under Quebec's jurisdiction.

• (1110)

Time and time again, we have had some very troubling discussions in this House, where the Prime Minister himself, after showing some openness where labour training and adjustment are concerned, changed his mind. He very clearly stated on several occasions that Canada would not eliminate the so-called proactive measures, such as the labour adjustment measures.

It was only during a scum, after several days of heated exchanges in this House, that, recognizing the consensus in Quebec, the Minister of Human Resources Development asked to

reopen negotiations. But what he had said before did not leave us with much hope.

I would add that, as it is, the bill gives the government the power to do as it pleases in the provinces' jurisdiction with the money collected from workers and businesses and, in some cases, with everybody's money. It will be up to the government to decide if there is an agreement, as we all deeply wish, but also to decide for how long and in what specific area the agreement will apply.

In view of all other areas covered by the name of this Department of Human Resources Development and of the way the clauses are formulated, the central government will be able to interfere in these areas on account of its spending power.

This has not been often stated in this House, but the spending power is not entrenched in the Constitution. I still have to use this word. While the efficiency of this program could be ensured in Quebec through coordination and management, control and planning by our own institutions and maximizing scarce resources, the funds are not used in the most efficient way because, at least in Quebec, the central government insists on being the one to plan, organize, manage and control.

Indeed, the government can say that it will sign contracts with this group, this organization or that person. The government is the one to decide the terms of the contract. This is a most efficient and rigorous way of setting national standards. The government will decide which needy group will get some money, regardless of the strategy, priorities and conditions set by Quebec. This is nonsense.

I read earlier a letter from 1991 referring to discussions with Mrs. McDougall that go back well before that date. As you can see, Quebec is not moving forward but backwards, because, in 1991, Mr. Valcourt did not dare to go ahead in spite of Quebec's opposition. He did not dare ignore the agreement in place.

• (1115)

Unfortunately, we must face the fact that Canadian federalism, since its inception, has always developed in the same direction, that of centralization. Again, it is quite possible and understandable, and we have nothing against it, that the other provinces and the central government decide to do things differently. If the other provinces do not care about what is in the Constitution, as long as they find the agreements adequate, it is fine by us.

I often noticed that the other provinces do not feel threatened by the central government. For instance, they did not feel threatened when the government passed Bill C-28 in 1994. I am sure that this legislation can be challenged under the Constitution because it enables the central government to designate those who will set out the conditions for granting scholarships to students. This has very substantial implications on the type of students that will enrol in

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colleges and universities, i.e. those who can afford to study. It is a very serious issue for the provinces, but they did not protest.

The right of withdrawal became much more stringent, new conditions were added to it; the Bloc Québécois objected to these conditions, but the provinces did not protest. That the central government or a financial institution can designate those who will set out the conditions that the students will have to meet in order to get a scholarship, I can respect that, but in Quebec, it cannot work this way.

In this bill, there was an historical recognition of Quebec's right to opt out with compensation. This right is nowhere to be seen in the bill. In Bill C-96, the government gives itself the power to decide alone how the Department of Human Resources will use the money. With the groups, there is no condition, no consultation. The government decides.

We are even a long way from the situation at the beginning of the 1960s. I have done so already, but I will read one more time the conclusions of a document presented by René Lévesque at the January 1966 federal-provincial conference on poverty. I will go over it rapidly in conclusion.

Here is what it said: "The establishment of a real economic and social development policy is now urgent. This policy must be integrated, flexible in its application and provide for a social security system centered on the family and based on the right to assistance suited to the needs. For efficiency and constitutional reasons, the Government of Quebec is the only one which can and should, within its territory, conceive and implement such a policy. Consequently, Quebec cannot accept that the Government of Canada assume this responsibility. Quebec does not, however, exclude interprovincial cooperation and mutual consultation".

• (1120)

Mr. Lévesque went on to say: "The economic and social development policy that we are developing will integrate a social policy, a regional development policy, a manpower policy, a health policy, a housing policy, a job training policy", and we could say a human resources development policy. "All these policies have not been described in this document, but it is important to indicate in these conclusions that we intend to use them all as a means of meeting our objectives.

"This comprehensive policy will not necessarily be in line, in its spirit and its application, with one the Government of Canada might opt for, but it will not necessarily go against it. However, the advantages that the people of Quebec will get from this policy will at least be equal, for efficiency and constitutional reasons, to those other Canadians might enjoy".

We have gone back a very long way from this statement of principle and from this description of a plan by a federalist

provincial government. We have gone back a very long way. Bill C-11 is totally unacceptable, it cannot be amended, and that is why, besides wishing that a new referendum on Quebec sovereignty be held soon, I propose this morning an amendment to the motion for third reading to have the bill withdrawn and the subject matter referred to a committee.

I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

"Bill C-11, An Act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development and to amend and repeal certain related Acts, be not now read a third time but that the Order be discharged, the Bill withdrawn and the subject-matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Maybe the hon. member for Mercier could give some clarification.

Mrs. Lalonde: Yes, I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I have not checked if she is still here, but the member for Laval-Centre and I had agreed that she would second my motion, with the agreement of the member for Lotbinière.

[English]

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to speak to the amended motion. I have looked forward to this opportunity for some time because what we are looking at is the last piece of enabling legislation for the House to consider.

• (1125)

Certainly after two years and some months of being in the House, it could not be more timely. Also of interest, it is the last piece of legislation to implement what I call the Kim Campbell cabinet.

I oppose the bill for a number of reasons and I will list them. It gives to the federal government powers to circumvent the provinces when establishing programs and initiatives through HRD.

I oppose the cheap partisan reason for the creation of the ministry of labour and I oppose the way the government is attempting to hide information from Canadians by eliminating the provision to create an annual report for the department.

I will spend some time speaking to the specifics. As I mentioned, my colleagues and I have legitimate and valid concerns about the legislation. In particular, there is an area of the bill which we believe provides the federal government with new powers to enter into agreements with agencies, groups or agents and allows the federal government to entertain these co-operative agreements without first having approached the provincial governments.

We have all heard the Minister of Human Resources Development naysay that challenge. We believe that simply put the bill gives the government the opportunity to circumvent the provinces

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when delivering social programs or any of the services relevant to the Department of Human Resources Development.

This kind of federal power grab runs contrary to the contemporary federal trend toward decentralization. We have spent many hours in the House in debate and in question period discussing that very point. Remember that the Liberal government promised Canadians during the Quebec referendum campaign that among other things it would move to greater decentralization. There has been zero movement on this front.

In this bill there is a marvellous example of a federal attempt to nationalize powers that did not exist before. This is a very old approach to government. This is the Trudeau approach. It is an approach which began just after the second world war, one which does not suit the needs of people in Canada today.

First year students in Canadian politics learn that Canada has a rigid constitution. It is rigid in the sense that constitutional amendments are not easily made. As is well known, it was extremely difficult to amend the British North America Act. We need not remind anyone that amending the Constitution has not been made any easier by the Canadian Constitution Act, as events since 1982 have so clearly demonstrated.

Amending procedures were not spelled out in the BNA. The result is that we had precious few constitutional amendments between 1867 and 1982. It will also be recalled that the BNA sought to establish a highly centralized union but that various judicial interpretations made it a more decentralized union. In addition, the Fathers of Confederation felt that in turning over responsibility for education, health and social welfare to the provinces they were dealing with jurisdictions that were not important and local in character. It also explains why Ottawa's power of taxation far exceeds its constitutional responsibilities.

The Fathers of Confederation gave the federal government power to raise moneys by "any mode or system of taxation". It is important to bear in mind the role of government in 1867 was highly limited.

The Rowell-Sirois commission pointed out: "The principal functions of the state followed the prescriptions of Adam Smith. Government was thought to have met its purpose when it provided for adequate defence, the enforcement of the general law for the administration of justice and the maintenance of a few essential public works".

In addition, Canadian society in 1867 was still largely a pioneer in rural society. Accordingly, it had clearly an individualistic outlook and a reliance on the family as the unit of mutual welfare.

The Great Depression would change all of that. Franklin D. Roosevelt's new deal would lead the way for governments in western industrialized countries to intervene to soften the sting of

economic misfortune. Lord Keynes, a noted Cambridge economist, was quick to provide the intellectual underpinnings for government intervention in the economy to mitigate the lows in economic cycles.

● (1130)

In brief, Keynesian logic provided a basis for counter-cyclical budgeting. It also provided a basis for government programs and measures to stabilize the economy, to promote economic development and full employment. It suggested that with latent demand and no limit in factors of production, governments could actually create the long sought after prosperous and rational societies desired.

Keynesian economics also legitimized government deficits and in time governments would spend more, tax more and borrow more, a great deal more. Does this not sound an awful lot like the fiscal policies of today's Liberal government?

It is this Keynesianism gone wild that causes the Minister of Human Resources Development and his bureaucrats to propose clauses like the ones in this bill that instead of allowing the provinces to manage their own affairs, allows the federal government to grab more power.

The Keynesian revolution captured the Department of Finance in Canada as it did the treasuries of other western countries. Canadians emerged from the second world war determined never to permit another depression of the kind witnessed in the 1930s.

In addition, by war's end, Canadians held a strong belief in the ability of government to intervene and manage the economy. Canadians had learned during the war that governments were able in moments of crisis and when moved by an all consuming goal to lead the country to high levels of economic activity and employment.

Not only did the allies win the war, but governments had managed the war economy well. Unemployment had fallen to zero, yet prices had been held down. Given this, no one was surprised when the Government of Canada presented a major policy paper to Parliament toward the end of the war which was Keynesian in outlook. It said: "The government will be prepared in periods where unemployment threatens to incur deficits and increases in the national debt resulting from its employment and income policy. In periods of buoyant employment and income, budget plans will call for surpluses".

However the expected severe post-war economic downturn did not materialize and the measure that the federal government had prepared proved unnecessary. Still, Ottawa became convinced that it possessed a new arsenal of economic policy to achieve high unemployment and more generally to manage the national economy.

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At the risk of stating the obvious, Keynesian economics looks to the national economy and to promoting balance in economic cycles when formulating policy prescriptions and to the national government as the key economic factor. The important point here is that Keynesian economics has a strong centralization bias. It looks to national fiscal policies, national industrial strategies and to national programs to develop the national economy. In short, Roosevelt and Keynesian economics would turn national governments loose on national economies.

Convinced that it had found the holy grail of economic policy, it had only to look to what other more western industrialized countries were doing to confirm their findings. Ottawa nevertheless recognized that it did not have the necessary jurisdictions to manage the national economy and to promote the positive state. The findings of the Rowell-Sirois royal commission had told it as much when it began to table its findings in 1940.

Ottawa also was all too well aware that given the inherent rigidity of the written Constitution, it could not count on constitutional amendments to give life to the welfare state. In addition, in the rare instances when it was able to secure a constitutional amendment, it only served to create shared jurisdictions.

For example, the 1951 amendment to the BNA which gave Ottawa authority to establish the old age security program made pensions a matter of shared federal-provincial jurisdiction. I will not even begin to comment on old age security, which we know as OAS, because as we all know the Liberals ostensibly killed it despite their campaign promises to the contrary.

• (1135)

This bill allows the government to grab more powers in keeping with the Keynesian principles I have already explained within a historical context.

The rigidity of the Constitution led the federal government to find ways to circumvent its provisions and to develop new mechanisms to implement a new economic order. The federal government would identify for itself a role in many areas of provincial responsibility through extensive use of its spending power. In time a whole edifice of federal-provincial programs in areas of provincial jurisdiction was put in place although such programs remain unmentioned in our written Constitution.

The clauses in this bill with which we are concerned will provide the federal government the opportunity to create joint programs with municipalities. This constitutional breach has been circumvented. Ironically municipalities are not even constitutionally recognized entities. These are big questions to ask and to answer.

The written Constitution in the end appears to matter little to federal policy makers. Ottawa in the post-war period attracted some of the best and the brightest determined to build a modern,

positive state. Fuelled by tax money from a rapidly expanding post-war economy and convinced that only the federal government could put into practice the lessons learned from Keynesian economics, Ottawa promoted a new constitutional doctrine which ignored the written Constitution.

Donald Smiley, one of Canada's leading constitutional scholars, explained: "According to the constitutional doctrine that came to prevail, the central government might legally spend revenues as it chose, even on matters within the jurisdiction of the provinces, and could at its discretion fix the circumstances under which a potential recipient might receive the federal largesse".

Bill C-11 allows the federal government to enter into agreements now with agencies and municipalities. The reason for this is so the federal government can continue to dole out that largesse and take credit for it. It is simple to understand. The federal government is reducing transfers to the provinces and as a result it is losing its clout, its ability to dictate how the money is spent. Therefore, it is losing its ability to buy votes by proclaiming how it is giving out the dole at the provincial level.

However, the Liberal need to buy votes through empty rhetoric and equally empty promises remains just as strong today as it ever was. In order to be able to buy those votes the federal government is now compelled to deal directly with agencies and municipalities.

The federal government did not wait long after World War II to introduce measures in the areas of health care and social policy. Within 20 years it would put in place a wide array of federal-provincial measures ranging from old age pensions to the establishment of a national health care program. In time the federal government would introduce its own programs and carve out for itself a powerful role and presence in virtually every sector in the economy.

When it opted for conditional grants it essentially intervened in provincial fields on its own terms. In the end it was able to carve out a role for itself in the provision of welfare assistance, in assisting the unemployed, in post-secondary education, in medicare, in energy, in industrial development, in economic development and so on.

The desire and ability of the federal government to intervene in areas of provincial jurisdiction did not wane in the 1970s. In the early 1970s the federal Department of Regional Economic Expansion introduced a new approach to economic development. In doing so, Ottawa signed a series of general development agreements, known as GDAs, with the provinces.

The GDAs were enabling documents in that they cleared the way for the federal government to support whatever measures were regarded appropriate to local, provincial and regional economic circumstances. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the GDA approach essentially tossed aside our written Constitution to enable

government to support whatever it felt was necessary to promote economic development.

A cursory look at the activities sponsored by the GDAs and their replacement agreements reveal an incredible array of measures and initiatives. No economic sector was considered off limits.

• (1140)

One corollary of this blurring of the constitutional lines is to confuse not just at the government level but more important at the level of the citizenry exactly which level of government is responsible for which service. The clauses in this bill which give new and greater powers to the provinces do nothing to redirect the constitutional blurring of the jurisdictional lines. In fact it only contributes to more blurring as now we can add another layer of government to the confusion.

As well, it has also given rise to overlap and duplication in government programs and to a costly government overhead. Try counting the number of units in the federal government sporting the labels of liaison, co-ordination, federal-provincial relations and intergovernmental relations, to describe what they do. Now we will have to add yet another level to this red tape insanity.

Countless meetings are held every month to administer federal-provincial programs and agreements. We should bear in mind that Ottawa spends over \$20 billion a year to pay federal public servants and to provide them with office space and other administrative arrangements. I can only imagine just how much more money this bill will end up costing Canadian taxpayers as it adds another layer to that already overburdened bureaucracy.

My colleague from Mission—Coquitlam moved an amendment to redress the offending clauses to which I have been referring. She moved an amendment that before the federal government enters directly into agreements with agencies or municipalities of a province that it first consult with and receive the approval of the lieutenant governor of the province in question.

The amendment was reasonable. It would still have allowed the federal government to enter into such agreements, even though of course we oppose them, but it would only have then required that the federal government inform the provinces of the actions about to be undertaken. However, the Liberals needed so badly to implement their vote buying clause that they refused to entertain this reasonable amendment.

I used to think that we were here in the House to work together. However, cynical partisan moves like that cause me to be circumspect. They cause me to believe that the Liberals are not really here for the betterment of our country. They are really only here to maintain the status quo, to hold onto power at all costs, even if it means willingly and knowingly doing the wrong thing and implementing vote buying policies just as those in this bill.

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I have great concerns that Bill C-11 will go another step down the road to giving the federal government greater powers, despite what it says. Not only will it create overlap and duplication, it will probably cost us billions of dollars all for the sake of buying Liberal votes.

Speaking of buying Liberal votes, that brings me to my second concern over this bill, which is the creation of the Ministry of Labour. This bill finally enables the last of the Kim Campbell cabinet departments.

In 1993 when the Prime Minister named his cabinet he did not name a minister for labour. Not a single Liberal complained then that such a position was necessary. Why was that? Because the job can be accomplished within the Department of Human Resources Development. We do not need an expensive portfolio for an issue that can be covered by other ministers. For almost two years the Liberals agreed with us on this point. Why did they change their minds? What caused the epiphany?

When the Liberals took power in 1993 they did not see a need for this individual or the assignment of this ministry. We did not hear a peep from anybody. However the Prime Minister changed his mind in February 1995. In order to entice the so-called star candidate from Quebec to run in a Quebec byelection, the Prime Minister promised her a new cabinet seat if she agreed to run. She agreed and they created the Ministry of Labour for her.

Let us face facts. The Liberals only created the job to satisfy their partisan backroom interests. Their focus was not labour; it was about their own job creation formula to entice a so-called star candidate.

During report stage on Bill C-11 we heard a lot of sanctimonious talk from the Liberals. They pretended to be the friends of labour. We know the truth, do we not?

The Reform Party has nothing to learn from the federal Liberal Party when it comes to labour relations and how to treat people. Our policies clearly state that we recognize the right of workers to organize unions, to strike peacefully and to carry out the business of collective bargaining.

• (1145)

The Liberals cancelled the federal public service workforce adjustment directive. I wonder how many Liberals campaigned on a promise to fire 45,000 public service workers. How many of them were honest enough to tell their constituents that as part of their job, job, job program they meant to fire 45,000 civil servants? I wonder how many of these Liberals campaigned on a promise to allow collective bargaining except, of course, when there is a strike in the port system. They were all very quick to force labour back to work, were they not?

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I wonder how many in the labour movement know that the Liberal Minister of Human Resources Development refuses to meet with the head of the Canadian Labour Congress. Over and over again in committee there have been complaints regarding this very action, or lack of action, on the part of the minister. This is what Liberals mean about being open to the concerns of Canadians. They refuse to even meet with labour leaders.

Also how many on that side of the House campaigned for quota based employment equity legislation like the kind they rammed through the House? The Liberal record speaks for itself. When it comes to labour issues, this government should be ashamed.

The Reform Party has clearly and honestly established its position regarding the existence of the job of Minister of Labour. Reform favours smaller, less expensive government that effectively provides services for Canadians where they cannot provide for themselves. To this end we believe that labour issues should be managed by the Department of Human Resources Development. As the Liberals first believed in 1993 there is no need for this position. The difference is that Reform is consistent on labour issues. Our Liberal colleagues appear not to be. They have flip-flopped all over the place on labour issues.

My final disagreement with Bill C-11 pertains to the fact that the government is trying to hide from Canadians both its performance and its future plans. It is doing this by eliminating the requirement for the production of an annual report. Indeed, this is really quite alarming when it is taken at face value. Colleagues on the other side of the House will say that it is just because they are really trying to reduce costs but this is a matter of financial accountability and certainly in terms of performance standards in any corporate sector would be an obvious expectation from a board of directors.

We had proposed an amendment that would require the Minister of Human Resources Development to table an annual report to the House. Typically the Liberals rejected this proposal. Anything that appears to promote open and honest government they oppose.

Bill C-11 as presented does not require an annual report to be made from the department. I am concerned that this may be just another way for the government to withhold information from the House of Commons and the people of Canada. I believe it should be mandatory for all government departments to publish annual reports and for the purpose of accountability they should be placed before Parliament.

As part of the new program review, the federal government is changing the production of the estimates. It suggests that in a few years it will make the estimates more user friendly, whatever that means, and that more useful and practical information will be included in the estimates. The government suggests that annual reports are so general that they border on being useless.

Every bill that has been introduced to create a new department has had the annual report component deleted. The government has deleted the requirement for the production of departmental annual reports. Our amendment would have required the government to continue producing that annual report component for each of those departments.

We are sceptical of the process for improving the estimates. At minimum, until such improvements have been made, annual reports should be continued. Until the estimates are improved, the lack of annual reports will result in the Canadian public receiving less information from government. In effect the Liberals are trying to hide, at least it appears, information from Canadians about the workings of their government.

We all know that the red book promises more open government. This is open government? No more annual reports is open government? I do not think so.

Reform exists to change government. Liberals had an opportunity to demonstrate to Canadians that they were willing to open up government and to allow Canadians greater access to all information regarding how it operates. It should not be a secret. What is the government trying to hide? It had the chance to open itself up to greater public scrutiny and it chose to hide.

• (1150)

It is taxpayer money that the Liberals are spending, my money and yours, Mr. Speaker. Canadians should know how and where their money is going.

The government, by opposing our amendment, proved to Canadians that it does not give the appearance of caring about accountability or openness. I ask the question again: What is the government trying to hide? Is this just another way for the Liberals to address their dismal failure on the deficit fight? They will not make public or even produce an annual report for this department, one of the largest spenders in the government.

This department is huge. Canadians, thanks to the Liberals, will not be able to keep track of its developments. The government says its estimates will be improved but it also said it would scrap the GST, and we know where we are at with that right now. Who are we to believe? Is this a case of what we do not know will not hurt us? Maybe that is why the government did not mention the debt in the budget speech. Ignore it and perhaps everyone else will too.

The Liberals should talk about it. They should admit that they have been responsible for the growth of the debt since 1968 and honestly attack the debt problem. We are seeing no action.

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I insist that we need an annual report for this department. I believe with the inclusion of the amendments the Reform Party suggested, Bill C-11 would be a much better bill. The amendments would make the department more forward thinking in its approach to problems and certainly more accountable.

If the Reform amendments had been approved and passed in the House we could have supported this bill. However, we have attempted to improve the bill and yet again the government has resisted.

Given that the government has clearly made a substantial new power grab in this bill and given that it refused even to listen to Reform's reasoned compromise, we cannot support it.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: That concludes the first stage of the debate.

[*English*]

We will now proceed to the next stage of debate where members will be entitled to 20-minute speeches, subject to 10 minutes of questions or comments.

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-11, the act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development.

This legislation is part of the overall efforts of this Liberal government to get government right, to reduce program overlap and to control costs.

The government prides itself in not forgetting the human element in all that it does. I find it important that the first word in the new department is in fact "human". Guelph—Wellington is a community where people care for one another. We are strong because volunteers and other caregivers reach out to assist those in need, the vulnerable, the aged and the many people in our community who need a hand during a difficult time.

We are fortunate to have such organizations as Block Parents, Change Now, Seniors Peer Advisory, Stepping Stone and Wyndham House that provide assistance, information, life skills and, most important, a smile for people in times of crisis.

The dedicated staff and volunteers of these and hundreds of other organizations in my community want government to assist them as they assist others. They want us to improve efficiency. This legislation brings together parts of several former departments in order to focus on human resource programs.

Portions of employment and immigration, health and welfare, secretary of state and labour have been gathered together in order

to focus on employment and income security matters. By focusing, the government can offer one coherent approach to the fundamental issues of dealing with Canadians in need. That really is what governments need to be about.

Guelph—Wellington uses its resources to build the greatest community in Canada. Therefore I am pleased that the second word in this new department is "resources". We often speak of natural resources, wood, coal, water and minerals, when we describe our country.

• (1155)

The government knows that its greatest resource is its people. The central question for the government has been, how do it use the resources to better serve the Canadian people? All around the country, individual Canadians as well as private industry, have had to reorganize in order to provide service in a different way. Canadians must be encouraged to think differently about how government relates to them. That does not mean that inadequate or poor service should be offered to the taxpayer.

The people who rely on the government for pensions, income support programs, unemployment insurance and labour market and employment information deserve the best service that they can get. However, the deficit crisis means that services must be provided differently.

One of the more unique ways is the new service delivery network. This includes conventional offices, electronic information kiosks, on-line services and community partnerships. This new information service will also offer two-way communication with clients across Canada. Its goal is to reduce costs, something the Reform Party should be pleased about, and to improve and expand client access, again, something I would hope all parties would be pleased about. The new service delivery network, like the Department of Human Resources Development, is using its resources to better serve all Canadians.

The final word in the department is perhaps its most interesting "development". We are talking here about many of the social programs that were developed by Liberal governments.

Whether it was the first Department of Labour established in 1900, the first Veterans Pension Act in 1919, Old Age Pensions Act in 1927, Unemployment Insurance Act in 1940, Family Allowance Act in 1944, universal pensions in 1952, the Canada pension plan and medicare in 1966, or the Canada Health Act in 1984, Liberals have had a long and important tradition of developing programs that provide assistance to Canadians.

This is nothing new. This is what Liberalism is. This is what Liberals stand for in this House today. Liberals have always had to fight off the naysayers, just as I hear from the Reform Party right now, who reject efforts to help each other through difficult times, to

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provide extra assistance in raising families, in our senior years or when we are sick.

Let us not forget, especially as there are members in the House of Commons today who want to take away these programs, that it was the social support programs that have made Canada the greatest nation on the earth. The opposition parties, in particular, should always remember that it was by the development of programs like unemployment insurance and universal pensions that Canada is respected in every single corner of the world.

Liberals know we have to continue to develop resources, to provide better service to Canadians. Like many service based agencies in Guelph—Wellington, we are learning on a daily basis to do with less.

Regrettably, that sometimes means busy signals and longer waits. I am proud that the local Guelph Canada Employment Centre offers and provides good service to the people of my community. Its downtown location offers a central place for clients who require service from the federal government. I am proud because the most important element of any human resource provided by government is service. In this legislation, a department has been created that reduces administrative expenses while improving services.

My constituents would be unhappy if I opposed this legislation. I would be curious to see if, like so many times before, Reformers, the self-proclaimed protectors of taxpayer dollars, will oppose the legislation.

• (1200)

Liberals cannot listen to those who say it cannot be done. It was heard in 1900 when the labour department was created and it was heard again in 1940 when unemployment insurance was created. In 1984 we heard again that it could not be done when we created the Canada Health Act. The ghosts of the naysayers are alive and well in the House today and they have found a home on the Reform benches.

It is time to exorcise those ghosts, time to stand with the Liberals and build a department that does not forget the human element and uses resources to their full advantage and develops on all of the great programs of the past. We must use the past to build the future.

I remind the House of the important issues before us. The people of Guelph—Wellington want us to create jobs and stimulate economic growth. They want us to co-operate with other levels of government and the private sector to build practical solutions for their benefit and for the benefit of all children.

The people of Guelph—Wellington are interested in this from the federal government. They have told me to get on with building the country, create jobs and growth and invest in the Canadian people.

The reorganized Department of Human Resources Development is giving Canadians innovative, cost effective programs and services. Once again we will rise to vote on this legislation. We will be asked to vote for legislation which builds on successes of the past and which helps create new successes. It helps us to go ahead.

I challenge the opposition parties to let go of the status quo. Do not be defenders of what has gone by and has not worked. Abandon the narrow political view of Canada they hold and stop holding on to the old way of doing this.

This legislation deserves the support of every member in the House of Commons today.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this bill, but at the same time somewhat troubled to have to do so, for it has been said almost ad nauseam already that the federal government's decision to create the Department of Human Resources is evidence of its disdain toward Quebec and the provinces in general. This is just one more piece of the puzzle, along with unemployment insurance reform and the Canada social transfer, to allow the federal government to continue to be involved, and to step up its involvement, in training and education.

In fact, the Department of Human Resources Development is a sort of embryonic Canadian ministry of education. It is as if the government had learned nothing from the past. Again and again, it has been said that the government no longer had the means to intervene in areas that were outside its jurisdiction, that it ought to learn to stick to what was within its jurisdiction, but the lesson has not been heeded. Once again, the creation of the department of resource development represents involvement in an area in which the federal government has never been very efficient.

• (1205)

In fact, using legislation to create a department is legalizing behaviour that was already there under the previous Conservative government and has been carried on by the Liberals, but now it is made official, made legal by a law. It is quite simply stated: "The federal government can decide to sign training agreements with the provinces, with groups, with individuals" without necessarily having to respect the priorities a province has defined.

With this type of analysis, people can easily think that this is a matter of sovereignists versus federalists, but I would like there to be a concrete examination of what it means and what its impacts will be.

Take the following case for instance. The Government of Quebec is presently developing an active employment policy. The minister responsible in Quebec asked each region in Quebec to examine existing programs at the provincial level aimed at helping people to find jobs, improving their employability and identifying target

groups in need of special support. These consultations are going on in every region.

At the same time, by creating the Department of Human Resources Development, the federal government gets the power to sign an agreement in a particular region in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada that could easily go against the conclusions which will come out of the ongoing consultations, in Quebec, on the establishment of a regional employment policy.

Such things have occurred on a regular basis in the past. For example, we have seen the federal government giving contracts for training projects in areas where people had already been trained under other regular training programs. Those people were getting training which is not recognized by the Quebec Department of Education in areas such as mechanics, office automation or electronic data processing and which did not necessarily follow the same curriculum as those defined by the Quebec government.

The end result was that instead of having 15 trained people available for that type of job, there were 25, 30 or 35 of them and this led to a result opposite to the one expected: Instead of being placed for jobs, people were faced with undue competition and some had to go elsewhere to find work. Therefore training, which was aimed at allowing people to remain in their own region, did not reach its objective.

In the past, the frequency of this sort of happening was often lessened through the good relations that developed between federal and provincial officials in each of the communities. However, that did not prevent \$250 million from being wasted in Quebec alone because of duplication of jurisdictions. Passing legislation establishing the Department of Human Resources Development will make this sort of duplication official. So, unless Quebec simply abandons its field of jurisdiction to the federal government, we will continue to have the useless expenditures and the perpetual duplication of the past. This is quite out of the question and beyond the means of our country.

There are needs. As the OECD has said, we in Canada spend a lot on training. The problem is that we do not spend wisely. We spend a lot on parallel bureaucracies, we no longer necessarily have the means to pay for duplicate bureaucracies, and we can no longer afford our inefficiency.

The actions of the federal government continue to roll along, like a steam roller, as if there had been no referendum. In fact the sovereignists lost the referendum by a hair, but the message was very clear and where the message sounds its clearest is in the area of manpower. This message was repeated at the Quebec City socio-economic summit. It was expressed by the Conseil du patronat du Québec, which even repeated it this week to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, saying that it is time

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the Canada employment centres came under Quebec's sole jurisdiction, so that concerted action may be taken and dynamic regional employment policies put in place to avoid having those on welfare shifted to unemployment and the unemployed shifted to welfare.

• (1210)

Why is the federal government insisting on intervening in this sector? Understandably, for the rest of Canada, outside Quebec, there may be a role for a department responsible for training. I have heard this already, for instance when the Standing Committee on Human Resources was touring the country, from a university chancellor who said: "If the Canadian training system is to be effective we must have national standards. The system must be highly operational. We must know precisely where we are going and have training objectives".

In Quebec, we have never claimed that this was impossible in the rest of Canada if the provinces and the federal government agreed. However, we need to have the required autonomy to act in keeping with our labour situation. The situation in Quebec is very different.

For example, we often hear talk in the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development about manpower mobility. People say that if we had, across the board, an unemployment insurance plan which required the same number of weeks everywhere, there would be a natural movement of people who would go where the jobs are and therefore there would be a more natural balance than with the present legislation.

Of course, this disregards the fact that people have acquired the taste, the habit and the will to work in certain regions, and to live there with their families, because they like it there. Moreover, this argument in Quebec becomes crucial if the system were to be applied uniformly as the Department of Human Resources Development—that steam roller which is a creature of the federal government—would like. The Department of Human Resources Development wants to ask people to move to find work. This will not only lead to diluting the French fact concentrated in Quebec, it will also have a negative impact on the very social fabric of Quebec, and on the fact that Quebecers are a people anxious to see to their own development.

We must realize that the creation of this kind of department is based to a certain extent on the federal government's decision to have a uniform and very neutral development tool that can be used across Canada. This is the kind of tool that did not work during the last 20 or 25 years. It did not produce anything. It did not yield the expected results, but the government persists in trying to make it work.

The present government members were not elected 15 years ago but at the same time as any one of us, that is two and a half years

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ago. I hope they came here with the idea of controlling the bureaucracy instead of being under its control. Why are they bringing us back to the old ways? They decided they would listen to the deputy ministers, to the senior public servants, and try once again to impose solutions instead of allowing people to make their own decisions, determine their directions and make the necessary choices locally.

The creation of the Department of Human Resources Development is a clear demonstration of this. In the end, the federal government is going over the provinces' heads. Let me give the House an example.

Clause 7 of the bill reads: "the Department may, with the approval of the Governor in Council, enter into agreements with a province or group of provinces for the purpose of facilitating the formulation, coordination and implementation of unemployment insurance, employment and immigration programs".

However, the other clause allows the same thing to be done directly with groups and organizations, and this causes the problems I explained earlier that all of us are experiencing in our ridings. Funds were given by the federal government for specific type of training, but that training was not necessarily in line with the priorities set by the Société québécoise de la main-d'oeuvre for that particular area.

• (1215)

At times, consultations at the local level prevent problems, but at other times, there are situations where the training being provided is in direct conflict with what Quebec is offering.

Six months after the referendum, in this area as in the other sectors, after the Prime Minister decided to forget about the distinct society issue, it is business as usual in the House. The steam roller is going full speed ahead. The government is fully committed to creating the human resources development department, which will legitimize the federal government's interference in areas which had never come under its jurisdiction.

The fact that Quebec sovereignists are not the only ones to condemn this decision should get the federal government to think twice about it. The Société québécoise de la main-d'oeuvre passed several unanimous resolutions denouncing this bill. There has been statements to the effect that in Quebec the consensus is to have this whole area under Quebec jurisdiction.

In Quebec there are diehard federalists who are part of this consensus; a case in point is the head of the Conseil du patronat du Québec, who cannot be accused of being a sovereignist, or pro-independence. He himself has asked the Minister of Human Resources Development to look closely into the matter and to

realize that the best thing the federal government could do regarding this issue would be to withdraw from this area.

Today, we are in the final stage of the bill. You will recall that it was introduced during the previous session and should have died on the *Order Paper*, but was revived in the new session.

Despite the fact that there has been a new Throne Speech, that we have the referendum results, that we now know what kind of changes Quebecers want, that there is unanimous agreement in Quebec on what should be done with regard to the manpower training issue, the federal government remains deaf or chooses to ignore the issue.

It goes ahead with the bill in order to interfere in several areas which do not come under its jurisdiction. I predict that, in a few years, we will see the federal government being judged by the Auditor General or by the population for the inefficiency of this department's spending on training.

We have examples of this in cases where the federal government decided to take action, like the strategy it adopted to fight unemployment in the Maritimes fishing industry or its approach to the problem of discrepancy between the workers available on the labour market and the jobs offered. Why is it that in x number of years, the government has not succeeded in solving that problem, it has not found a way to train the unemployed so that they can take on the available jobs? All this is the result of the current system, and they want to officialize that system by creating the Department of Human Resources Development.

They lack imagination, initiative and receptiveness to what people are saying about the kind of system they want and about their need to know that decisions will be made at a local level and within the context of governmental choices.

Within the Canadian system, there is a provincial government which has chosen to say: "Employment will be our priority. We will do all we can to optimize the potential of our people". But the federal government leans the other way; I am not using that example to say one attitude is better than the other, but the federal government chooses a completely different approach, as we can see now with the Unemployment Insurance Act, where it is said that people who regularly receive unemployment benefits do so voluntarily and exploit the system. They are made to appear to be abusing the system.

The federal government approaches the area of unemployment, the area of manpower mobility, in a way which is completely different from that of the provincial government. As long as both levels of government can intervene in the same area of jurisdiction there will be inefficiencies. Measures taken by one cancel out measures taken by the other.

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• (1220)

This is not good and, in the end, it is always at the expense of the taxpayer. Although the money in the unemployment insurance fund comes from employers and employees, nobody denies that the government has some responsibility to make sure that the money is used adequately, that it is used for the intended purpose. There is no excuse for not opting for the right way to do things, for not delegating to Quebec all the active measures regarding employment, so that Quebec may have full jurisdiction and be able to harmonize them with all its other economic actions.

You cannot operate in isolation. You cannot have a certain approach to economic action and another one to employment. This is inconceivable. This, however, is more less the result of the mess we are now in with regard to the use of our human potential. We launched into a race for productivity without expanding the necessary effort to make sure that those who get trampled in this race, those who are pushed out of the labour force, have other opportunities to find employment.

Unfortunately, the bill on the table today for the creation of the Department of Human Resources Development will never have the efficiency, the reaction speed required to be able to respond quickly to the new requirements of the labour market. In order to do that the action has to be decentralized, it has to be geared to very local priorities and it has to fit a single government orientation.

At the present time we do not find that in Canada and the victims of that situation are the young people entering the labour force and the older workers in their fifties who lose their jobs and cannot find any alternatives.

For all these reasons, I think it is important that the government reflects once more on this bill before passing it and that the citizens realize that this bill creating the Department of Human Resources Development will be much more useful to the federal upper bureaucracy than to the people it is supposed to serve, that is all the citizens who need an efficient, viable and reasonably priced service.

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member on his speech, which the government should use as a model for developing its employment and manpower policies.

The hon. member told us, and rightly so, that we can no longer afford to be ineffective. However, with a deficit that is now close to \$33 billion and a debt of nearly \$600 billion, I would like to ask the hon. member whether he agrees that it is time for the government to wake up and that the fight against unemployment is not incompatible with the fight against the deficit.

I would also like the hon. member to comment on whether the government responsible for human resources development could be a little more imaginative in its employment policies and leave this in the hands of the provinces, which have real expertise in the area of employment and manpower.

Mr. Crête: Mr. Speaker, I think it is indeed the wrong approach to oppose unemployment and deficit as if both could not be fought at the same time. For example, if the federal government had really decided to thoroughly review its spending in various areas, it could have reduced the deficit without also having to generate a UI fund surplus that is somewhat artificial and designed to make the federal government look good. The government can then brag about reducing its deficit. This money, however, is not being used productively but merely collected in this fund.

There may be a reserve fund—the amount is now pegged at \$5 billion for this year. There is a need to put this money back into circulation. One approach would be to make premiums low enough so that employers and employees can have money in their pockets allowing them to consume and thus stimulate the economy. And by reducing their costs, employers would be able to develop their businesses and create more jobs.

We are going through a very particular situation in which economic growth does not necessarily lead to job creation.

• (1225)

In this regard, we should perhaps start as we did with the deficit by setting clear objectives. We could set a target employment rate for January 1, 1998 and plan departmental actions accordingly. It is not a matter of creating artificial jobs, but of making sure that every departmental employee will be concerned about maximizing human potential.

When the government goes before the electorate two or three years from now, it should be judged on how it helped people to work, to develop their potential; we would then have a clear, objective criterion. As far as the employment issue is concerned, this government can be criticized for never making clear commitments and being lulled by an economic growth that never led to additional jobs.

Proposals should be put forward with respect to the reduction of overtime or to work sharing. Even the UI reform has some perverse effects in this regard. Reducing the maximum wage on which premiums are paid encourages large corporations with highly paid staff to raise their salaries and increase overtime a little, with the net result that they hire fewer people.

There is much thinking to be done in this regard, but we must act quickly. This will not be done by creating a department such as the new Department of Human Resources Development.

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Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to my hon. colleague for his accurate representation of my constituents' concerns.

I would like to ask him how this so-called reform will actually penalize women and young people who are currently looking for work or waiting for unemployment insurance benefits. In what way will they be twice penalized? In my riding, we have many mothers who are single parents and whose jobs are not secure. I noticed how accurately the hon. member depicted my constituents' concerns in his remarks.

In my region, the rate of unemployment is upwards of 11 per cent. There is also a very large number of people on welfare. How will this reform, as I am told in my riding, drive more people onto welfare?

I would like my hon. colleague to explain to the people of my riding how they will be affected by this reform?

Mr. Crête: I thank my hon. colleague for her question, Mr. Speaker.

It is important to realize that the unemployment insurance reform was developed and put forth by the Department of Human Resources Development, the very department to be established through the bill before us.

As for how this reform will penalize women and young people, first of all, by requiring people to work 910 hours, or 26 thirty-five hour weeks, to qualify, it will automatically condemn many young people to pay into the unemployment insurance fund without drawing any benefit from it, which will encourage them to go underground. That defies comprehension.

There are also tighter requirements affecting women. The Fédération des femmes du Québec felt that the bill, as it stands, even closes the door on maternity leave. Incidentally, the government has yet to move an amendment to remedy this situation.

As women hold down the most precarious jobs on the market, they are the first victims of the current wave of restraints. Increasing the hours of work required to qualify will unavoidably force them back onto unemployment insurance and welfare faster, since they will have been unable to accumulate enough hours.

So, before tightening unemployment insurance requirements like this bill does, the government should have put programs in place to really give people a chance to find a job. Young people, women and all the others do want to work and to develop, but this reform is certainly no help, quite the contrary.

• (1230)

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are rules in this House which keep me from mentioning certain observable facts, but we are now dealing more with the unobservable. What we

can observe though is an incredible attitude on the part of the government during a debate on the new authority being delegated to the Minister of Human Resources Development. We, the Bloc Québécois, the official opposition, seem to be the only party in this House that cares about this issue.

Rather surprisingly, the federal administration has been operating for over two and a half years without this legislation, which officializes the consolidation of various services that used to be part of other departments. The government is trying to tell us that this is a minor change of little consequence.

Those who follow politics might think that, indeed, this is a minor change. However, the hon. members for Mercier and for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, who spoke before me, both sit on the human resources development committee and they strongly emphasized that this is not a minor change, but a major one.

The government wants to increase the authority of the Minister of Human Resources Development. This comes barely a few months after Quebec was promised it would decentralize and provide for greater flexibility, so as to avoid duplication between the federal and provincial governments.

If the bill reflected that commitment, I would be the first one to recognize it. However, if you read the bill you quickly realize that it goes in the opposite direction, toward greater centralization and control by the federal state regarding areas which do not come under its jurisdiction.

This allows the federal government, and particularly the minister, to be even more involved in manpower training. The government refers to decentralization, and we can see in this bill that it would be possible. This bill gives the minister the authority to bypass provincial governments regarding manpower training, even though there is a consensus in Quebec to do just the opposite. That consensus calls for leaving all the necessary tools, including active employment measures, in the hands of the Quebec government, which should be the only level of government involved, to ensure greater consistency and avoid duplication and waste.

Instead, when the federal government talks about decentralization, it means that the process would be achieved through its employment centres dealing directly with community groups, businesses and perhaps even municipalities. The minister is being given full authority. This is the government's idea of decentralization.

However, it is just the opposite of what Quebecers were told shortly before the referendum, when the federal government said it would fulfil their wish for change.

This is another example of double talk which is ultimately tantamount to telling a falsehood. Why? Because the government means exactly the opposite of what it says.

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• (1235)

Another thing bothers me. You have to remember that we are now dealing with Bill C-11. This bill is identical to Bill C-96 which was introduced in this House in June 1995 and which the government left hanging throughout the pre-referendum period in order to avoid stirring things up.

Now the government comes up with a new throne speech. Usually, after prorogation, a speech from the throne contains some new ideas. Yet, except for the measure implementing the budget, all the other bills, including Bill C-11, are old pieces of legislation left in abeyance. Is there anything new? We do not think so. There is nothing new, just another smoke screen.

While delivering a new throne speech, stating some great principles and using a lot of rhetoric, the government is in fact just carrying along and acting as usual. Nothing has changed. It is just chugging along.

Today, the party across the way has decided not to have any of its members take part in this debate on a bill that will officialize the most important federal department. When I say the most important, I mean financially. If we set aside debt servicing, we realize that almost 50 per cent of the budget, that is between 40 and 50 per cent of program expenditures go to the human development resources department. That is a lot of money.

But what do we notice here, in the House? No backbencher has spoken in the House for a while now, as if nothing was going on. I can maybe understand the behaviour of hon. members from other parts of Canada, but how can the members from Quebec remain quiet when this bill will officialize greater centralization and intervention by the federal government in provincial areas of jurisdiction?

The members from the province of Quebec read the newspapers and meet the people. They are aware of the consensus on this issue. They know that the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre is what can be called a group of organizations or a consortium that is trying to implement job creation measures. Let me remind the House of who belongs to this Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre. There are, of course, the unions and central labour bodies, but also the Conseil du patronat, the Institut canadien des adultes, the Mouvement Action-Chômage and a lot of community organizations. The Société brings together all the organizations who are concerned about the employment situation and who have given their support. They are members of the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre or they have supported it by submitting briefs. I am sure all Quebec Liberal members have received those briefs.

Unfortunately, we cannot help but see that they do not seem to be moved by that. The contradiction between what the government

says officially and what it does is obvious. Nevertheless, they remain silent, they stay away from this debate as if this matter had no significance whatsoever.

We are talking about Bill C-11, that will officially establish this department. What does the government do in the meantime? It uses the same approach with human resources development. It tried this approach with the unemployment insurance reform. It tried to avoid any direct contact with the people during consideration of that bill.

• (1240)

The committee is sitting at this very moment and it is using video technology to hear evidence. One organization at the time, and they are hand picked. And because of its majority, the government can invite practically whoever it wants. It is trying to do this very quietly. Oh the unemployment insurance reform will not change a lot of things; it is being done very quietly in committee.

But hundreds of organizations have asked to be heard, and they are being told that it is not possible, that time is of the essence, that July 1 is coming soon. This is exactly how this government operates. I have also noticed recently, especially during question period, that it is difficult for the opposition to attack the government because the Prime Minister is often away or a particular minister is on a tour somewhere. It seems that we are fighting I would not say ghosts, but people who are less and less visible in Parliament.

We, in the official opposition, find it deplorable that the third party also finds this issue insignificant, since its members are not concerned about this bill that will create a department that will administer an enormous amount of money. Almost half, or between 40 and 50 per cent, of the government's total budget is allocated to this department. That does not seem to be of any interest to the third party, nor to certain independent members, nor to the leader of the Conservative Party. The leader, who aspires to become Prime Minister one day, is not concerned about a department whose budget represents almost half of the government's total budget. It is unbelievable.

What will it take to wake them up, to change this law of silence? For Bill C-11 is a law of silence, a law making silence official. I am almost tempted to stop for a minute of silence, since that would so aptly symbolize what is happening here. I am almost tempted.

I did keep silent for five seconds, but my convictions and beliefs prevent me from staying quiet, for this is so important. I would like the people watching us at home to realize what is happening here in terms of social programs. They are trying to make cuts, vigorous cuts, but ever so quietly. And our viewers will be affected.

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Without any demagoguery, let me just say this: "Fellow citizens, take care, be even more vigilant than before, because this government is trying to make us adopt changes in a new way, through a quiet approach, or in other words by not attaching any importance to subjects that in fact are very important".

I have been on the Human Resources Development Committee for two and a half years now. When we take the trouble to go out to consult the public, when we go into the field to meet with organizations, when members of Parliament take the trouble to meet with the people in their ridings, no matter what region they are in, there is one reality which strikes us, independent of the statistics.

Officially, the unemployment rate has dropped a bit, but if the Statistics Canada figures are examined more closely, we realize that the drop is not because more people are working, but because more are giving up looking for work. These statistics do not include employable welfare recipients who cannot find work. We cannot let this pass without comment.

I am sure that the hon. members see people in their riding offices every time they are back in their ridings, and hear from them that things are not getting any better. There are no more jobs than before.

• (1245)

What we see in the labour market at the moment is that, through globalization, government cuts and deregulation, the number of part-time jobs is increasing and the number of full-time jobs is decreasing. Companies are trying to re-open collective agreements, citing competition, in order to cut back working conditions in some cases. Salaries are on the decline at the moment.

I have just come from a meeting of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development. People were talking about change. They were saying that more than a third of jobs right now are part time. And who holds these jobs primarily? Women. Women hold 70 per cent of jobs that are mostly part time, threatened, ill paid, insecure and non unionized. There are young people in such jobs too.

What is this government doing with its unemployment insurance reform at the moment? It is trying to tighten unemployment insurance eligibility requirements. It is making unemployment insurance less accessible especially to young people and to women who want to return to the labour force after raising their children. These are the two main population groups affected.

The method of calculating by weeks is being changed to a method of calculating by hours. With the hours system, two part-time jobs may indeed be combined, but this arrangement will create increased competition, a race, a marathon, a sprint for the latest little job on the market. Even workers in full-time, but seasonal, jobs for a short time will be tempted in the tourist season,

for example, to find some little job or a part-time job and thereby increase competition for such jobs. This will be the case especially with young people.

People do not realize we can no longer rely on unemployment statistics. I even heard a Reform member say yesterday that unemployment insurance was the cause of unemployment and that, if we abolished unemployment insurance, there would be no more unemployed. I can understand most people taking even the meanest of little jobs anywhere to avoid starving to death, but this sort of approach has nothing to do with reality.

We need more than just jobs, we need quality, well paid, stable and affirming jobs. We are no longer in the industrial age when children were made to work and when people worked six or seven days a week. This is an age, according to the sociologists, of quality of life.

The Canadian government was delighting in the fact that Canada was one of the countries with the highest quality of life—I have a hard time accepting that.

Representatives of Campaign 2000 have said on a number of occasions that 20 per cent of children are poor. When we talk of 20 per cent of children being poor, it is not the children who are poor, but their parents. Sometimes the families are single parent families and very often the single parent is a woman.

We do not see the social change taking place today. Nobody can do anything about it, but, increasingly, we are seeing very poor families and low income single parent families.

• (1250)

We are supposed to believe that everything is fine, that we can rejoice, that we can afford to cut help to the poorest members of society in an effort to bring the deficit under control, and to make UI eligibility criteria three times as strict for new claimants on the assumption that once they try UI they will become addicted to it, as to a drug. What a warped view of society!

The other day, the Minister of Human Resources Development told me that there were 125,000 UI abusers. I checked with agencies working in this area, such as Action chômage Québec, and I was told that 75 per cent of people who appeal, who ask for a review of their case, win in the end. If you win, does this mean that you abuse the system? I do not think so.

You are motioning to me that my time has expired. I hope that I will be asked questions so that I can go on.

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Lévis, for his analysis of the situation. I agree with him wholeheartedly; we are in a very distressing situation. It is true. I cannot understand why, given the seriousness of the situation, the Liberal Party does not co-operate more and does not try to give us some explanations.

I agree with my colleague that a society with so many unemployed, a society where there are no jobs is an ailing society. What do we have to offer? There is only confusion in everything that is proposed.

Last Saturday, I listened to the Prime Minister's speech where he explained that the advantage of the unemployment insurance system is that it takes money from the rich provinces to give it to the poor ones. But that is not what they are doing. Maybe they do take money from the rich provinces, but they use it to pay the debt and reduce the deficit. Instead of creating jobs with that money, they apply it to the deficit in order to create more commissions dealing with provincial jurisdictions, in order to interfere in other provincial areas, spend again and generate duplication and squandering.

There is confusion in the bill we are debating now, but there is confusion in other areas also. We clearly saw that this week with regard to the Constitution. Last Saturday, they had found the idea of the century: the homeland of the French language. But three or four days later, that wonderful idea had fallen by the wayside and they might go back to the distinct society. It is the same in many areas.

In my riding, we are facing a problem that maybe my colleague could talk about. It is the SEA program, the Self-Employment Assistance program. It is dreadful. They want us to believe this program is meant to create jobs, but in many cases the only result of that assistance is to cut unemployment insurance benefits and send the people back to welfare. They tell people that if they have a good idea, they will help them to implement it and create their own job. But they ask for a plan and when the plan is presented, they tell the unemployed: "Well you were working on your plan and therefore you were not available and looking for work, so we are withdrawing your unemployment benefits".

• (1255)

There have been many such cases. There is always duplication and waste. They talk about replacing unemployment insurance with employment insurance, but that does not deal with the problem. What they are really doing is reducing the number of recipients in order to have more money for other projects. Instead of using the money to create jobs, they make the unemployed pay for past spending.

I would like my colleague to explain the SEA a bit further. Did they have the chance to discuss it in committee? Could we not suggest that when they want to give an unemployed person the opportunity to create his or her own job, they should let that person do so in peace?

Mr. Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I note yet again that my colleague for Châteauguay is very much attuned to the reality of Quebec and of his riding.

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The SEA program, it must be said, is an active employment measure, which the federal government intends to continue. Those of us forming the Quebec consensus would prefer the money currently invested in this program be given to Quebec to permit more consistent management of the various activities involved in job development.

My colleague is absolutely right in the present context. He has given me the opportunity to point out that there is a problem with the program. There can be no appeals. The officials on the committee reach a decision after looking at a business plan and, in the case my colleague mentioned, had an appeal been possible, the individual in question might perhaps have won his case, particularly because the appeal is not heard by the same people.

This is what the people of Action-chômage told me: "When appeal is possible, 75 per cent of the people win their case". I am not saying the existing legislation is perfect or that it ought not to be improved, because this is a specific case, but it would have to be amended or improved to provide for an appeal mechanism. This is the sort of solution we must look at.

We must remember, as the member for Châteauguay rightly pointed out, that this program must not be seen as a way to resolve all the problems. We must understand that those who have access to this program are on unemployment insurance and therefore, by definition, people who have lost their job. Not everyone has the means to set up a business. There could be a trap. I am not saying that it is the intention of the officials, because they carry out the programs chosen by the government.

But there is a trap. If the business works, that is fine. However, if, because of a lack of money it does not, and the unemployment insurance benefits run out, the individual, because he has a business and is independent, is no longer entitled to unemployment insurance.

If his business got financing from different people, friends, or banks or elsewhere, he may not be eligible for social assistance. You know, to be eligible for social assistance, your assets must be limited. Without being wealthy, someone could have a house or some possessions. There is a trap.

Furthermore, not everyone is destined to be a business person. People think you just start a business, but you need training and resources. It has to be done with the support of the community.

Other members may have questions for me.

• (1300)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): We have only 60 seconds remaining, which can be split.

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill C-11, which is so important, and

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particularly pleased to follow my two illustrious colleagues for Lévis and Châteauguay. Bill C-11, as you know, is more or less a housekeeping bill, in that it is aimed at creating the new Department of Human Resources Development, which is a fairly weighty component of the federal government.

This bill will, of course, be passed. We are discussing it, and discussing it a great deal, because there are a number of highly negative aspects connected to it which we want to point out. Yet we know it will go through, because the federal government has the majority. If, however, it were in my power to prevent the department from being created, of course I would do so, because to date this department has provided the most glaring example of abuse by the federal government.

The Department of Human Resources Development has, perhaps, wrought more havoc on Canada as far as social programs are concerned, than all of the other departments combined. It is the one which sends so many people to my office in a terrible situation, worried about their future, their job, their unemployment insurance. And it is not finished with its mischief, either, for this department is the one they want to use to more or less solve one of Canada's most serious problems.

As you know, Canada has a huge debt, one that has been denounced by the International Monetary Fund on several occasions, and one that places Canada in the ranks of the most indebted countries in the world. In fact, looking at the G-7 membership, Canada is second only to Italy. Canada is in a financial crisis, a debt crisis, in fact it is technically bankrupt. Canada's \$550 billion debt is a big problem. A very big problem, one that was created by the incompetence of certain members of this House, before our time of course.

Previous governments have all been so irresponsible in their spending, especially since the arrival of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and Brian Mulroney later on. When Trudeau came along, Canada's debt was a small one. You might say it was reasonably manageable, one which did not worry foreign investors or harm Canada's economic development. Then it went up to \$250 billion, and doubled that under Mulroney. The present Liberal government is, of course, attempting to curb it, but without any appreciable success.

They talk of success, but we know very well that the \$5 billion reduction in Canada's deficit was made at the expense of Canada's workers and employers, and at the expense of the unemployed. It is, as we know full well, in this Department of Human Resources Development that this kind of misappropriation of funds, what I would call a kind of fraud, a kind of lie perpetuated in Canada, is planned.

The money in the UI fund comes from Canadian employers and employees; the federal government has not contributed a single penny since 1990. This fund comes from a tax on employers and employees, who are the sole contributors. The federal government then takes \$5 billion from this fund to reduce its deficit.

• (1305)

It is in short what happened with the Department of Human Resources Development and all other federal policies. It is the only major bill this government managed to come up with and it will pass. I am sure this bill will pass because government members are in the majority. It is essentially the key bill that this government put forward through the Department of Human Resources Development.

Of course, we can also talk about the reduction of transfer payments to the provinces, in that the government may cut spending on health and education programs by \$7 billion by the year 2000. These cuts put pressure on the provinces. These cuts in transfer payments have forced the provinces to adjust, as Quebec is now doing.

It has even become necessary in the area of health care, as we know full well. But I wonder about education. I wonder if this government really has lofty designs on society in trying to reduce its contribution to education. This threatens the future of our young people, who these days need a good education in order to find jobs and make ends meet.

Through the Department of Human Resources Development, the federal government has taken measures such as reducing spending in health and education by cutting transfers to the provinces. The federal government tried to shift these cuts to the provinces to make them take the blame, and then misappropriated money from the UI fund. The fact is that, over three years, something like \$15 billion will be diverted.

Then the Minister of Finance will say: "I managed to reduce the federal debt." I mean by that that he will at least have reduced the deficit and discharged his duty to the people of Canada.

As I said earlier, this is misappropriation of funds, nearly embezzlement, because contributions to an insurance program are normally expected to be used for that purpose and not for some other purpose. Normally, employees and employers who contribute to the UI fund should expect their money to be used to make sure that those who lose their jobs are paid benefits out of the UI fund and provided with manpower training so that they can re-enter the labour force.

But that is not how it was used. Not only does the government use this money to reduce its debt, but it also tightened UI eligibility requirements, thereby effectively reducing the number of people who qualify for UI benefits. Imagine that. Do you think that is fair? More and more frequently, participating employers are seeing their UI claims denied.

This government has brought down three consecutive reforms. First, the number of eligible claimants was reduced to about 60, 57, 55 per cent. Then, the second reform further reduced this

percentage to about 47 or 45 per cent. This means that 47 or 45 per cent of those who lose their jobs are entitled to UI.

• (1310)

Now with the latest reform, the most drastic and unfair one conceivable in Canada, only one third of people losing their job will be entitled to UI. This is a fraud, this is embezzlement. If only the number of people losing their job remained the same, and eligibility criteria were such that more people could be on UI. But this is not the case. Fewer and fewer people will be eligible.

Not only will there be fewer people eligible, but they will receive smaller benefits for a shorter period of time. This is marvellous, magical, because of course according to statistics there will be fewer and fewer unemployed workers in Canada since, when you are no longer eligible for UI, have no job and are not entitled to UI, and there is no other recourse, what do you do? You go on welfare. Welfare is a different kind of system, it is a provincial system. If one is not eligible for welfare, one disappears from the face of the earth, one becomes invisible.

From the federal perspective, this is marvellous, it is as if the unemployment rate was going down in Canada. This is marvellous. Through various tricks, statistics and funds, the problem created in the first place by the federal government and its disastrous overspending over the last 10 years is being dumped on the provinces. Provinces will now have to support more people on welfare.

Access to the unemployment insurance fund will be more limited and, moreover, provinces will be faced with cuts in the most important areas, the most vulnerable like health and education, and now, with the new Department of Human Resources Development, pensions. They are now going after our seniors, because they have been spared until now. The reform of old age pensions will primarily target women, since the pension will be determined based on family income.

This means that the woman who stayed home all her life to raise a family, who did not have any form of employment recognized by society, because she was a housewife, might not have the right to an old age pension. She will continue to be dependent on her husband. This way, the federal government will save billions of dollars at the expense of the most vulnerable people of society: the young, the sick, the old and the unemployed.

This is what the Liberal government is doing to Canada. It is going after the most vulnerable. It is going after those who are poorly organized, insecure and focus on surviving from one week to the next.

People come to my office, single women with two, three children, who are without a job and have a really hard time surviving on welfare. They want to work.

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If you allow the federal government to use the money from the unemployment insurance fund to reduce the debt rather than investing into job creation or manpower training, this is what we will get. More and more people will know hardship and suffering. This is what the federal government will give us. This a rotten government.

• (1315)

Mr. Speaker, I am not referring to you directly, but the government's social policy is totally rotten and unfair. It is a fraud, a misappropriation of funds. It is so rotten. One cannot imagine a worse social program, given that the root of the problem is the huge national debt of \$550 billion, which concerns the International Monetary Fund and which will soon exceed \$600 billion, in the year 2000.

When you think about the problems that triggered the initiatives taken by the human resources development department, you realize that there were other, easier, more reasonable and fair solutions to solve the issues. But the government deliberately chose to target young people, the sick, the elderly and the unemployed.

Who was spared? Who was spared in every possible way? The rich, the well-to-do and the large corporations. The government was generous to them. It is that simple.

Let me just give you a few examples. Take the all-important family trust issue. For those who do not know how family trusts work, you first have to be a millionaire. Family trusts are not for everyone: it is a very select club. One has to be very rich, like the Minister of Finance, who is worth several million, or like the Reitman, the Bronfman and all the other very rich families. So, you must first be rich to join the select group benefiting from family trusts.

It costs a lot of money to set up the program that allows these families, through a family trust, to avoid having to pay taxes. These families never pay taxes. This is great. They make millions in profits each year, but they do not pay taxes. This is truly wonderful.

It is estimated that, in Canada, thanks to these family trusts, about \$100 billion are not subject to any taxes. One hundred billion dollars in profits these wealthy families make in Canada. If I were the Prime Minister, I would go and get at least half of these \$100 billion. There are thousands of people who are hungry, who have no jobs and who do not have enough to feed their children. Consequently, when you have rich people who do not know what to do with their \$50 million, you go and tell them: "Listen, not only have you not paid taxes on your profits for X number of years, but you have \$100 billion in family trusts. Therefore, we will collect half of that amount, that is \$50 billion".

Imagine, only with this fair, reasonable and justifiable measure, the government could have collected \$50 billion more in taxes.

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However, it chose not to take \$50 billion from the family trusts, but rather \$5 billion from the unemployed.

This government spared the wealthiest families. It even warned them to reconsider their finances, because in five or six years from now, it may have to change the conditions applying to family trusts.

The government could have gotten more money from corporations who avoid paying taxes. An estimated \$3 to \$4 billion go to banks in the Bahamas and the West Indies. An estimated \$4 billion a year, from what I have heard.

The government could have closed the tax loopholes used by corporations. It could have taxed the banks. Imagine, last year alone, banks pocketed \$5.2 billion in net profits. Shareholders took all that money home with them. The banks' profits almost doubled from the previous year. We are not talking peanuts here. The government collected about \$100 million from the banks over a two-year period. That is a little under one per cent. That is not much for banks.

• (1320)

All that to say that this government is rotten to the core. It does not have a social policy, it promotes a policy based on the best interests of the fittest and the richest and it picks on the most vulnerable people of all, the weakest, the young, the old and the sick. Come next election, I hope the people will realize that we need a change of government.

Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his wonderful speech. I would like him to be more specific. We know that Mr. Martin's budget has affected three generations: the 18 to 30-year olds, the 30 to 60-year olds and those who are 60 years old and over.

I would like my colleague to be more specific on the issue of part time jobs. In Champlain riding, there are many part time jobs, and I would like him to explain what it implies. We know that unemployment insurance has been cut, and that this will this category of workers very badly.

Mr. Marchand: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Champlain, who in fact is paid to do this job. All joking aside, there is nothing funny about part time jobs. The schedule that the government was using before to give out unemployment insurance was based on the number of weeks worked, while it is now based on the number of hours worked. But in some cases, we could consider that the number of hours required to qualify for unemployment insurance has tripled. A person must work three times as much, at least twice as much, to qualify for unemployment insurance.

So, people who have part time jobs, especially fishermen, seasonal workers, young people who have jobs or jobs at McDonald's, for instance, and many other people will be in a situation where they will have to contribute to the unemployment fund, but they will not be eligible for benefits. That is what is happening.

That is another example of the blatant unfairness the government is creating with this bill.

We can hope that the government will make changes, but I do not know if cosmetic changes will do when deep down the whole thing is rotten. It is like cancer. For a person who already has cancer, if we cut off one of his arms or add on a finger, we give him some support, but it is still difficult to give him his health back. Essentially, this bill sponsored by the Department of Human Resources Development should be thrown out. We ought to rethink this bill's whole approach.

In fact, it is not just this bill. This reflects the whole mentality of the Liberal government, its social and economic policies. On that, I must say that except for a minor initiative of a few million of dollars at the beginning of its mandate in 1993, under the infrastructure program which, as my colleague from Champlain knows, created jobs, and was a good initiative, the government has done nothing to create jobs, absolutely nothing.

• (1325)

The Liberals did nothing but get what my other colleague on my right described a few moments ago as a case of "verbal diarrhea".

[*English*]

The government suffers from a big case of verbal diarrhoea. Its members are the ones standing in this illustrious hall, giving us all kinds of theories and explanations on how well they are doing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, as my time has almost expired, I want to thank again my colleague from Champlain for allowing me to speak for another five minutes.

Nevertheless, I wanted to be sure to underline something I find important. In Canada and in Quebec, people must be made aware of the situation, because this is no laughing matter. It is not something without importance. When we talk about unemployment insurance and employment, youth training, health and pensions in a society, or when we talk about a government which has nothing to offer to stimulate job creation, these are not trifling matters. Today, millions of people are affected. The worst will come in a few months. That is why people are not really aware of this bill's impact. They are not aware of the full impact of this bill, which will come into effect in the next few months.

We are still waiting, but these are extremely serious measures that will affect many people. Once again, this bill reflects the government's unfair attitude. The greatest injustice that can be imagined, that has been condemned since the beginning of human history, is precisely this kind of injustice favouring the rich, the establishment of programs or projects allowing those better off to feather their nests and fill up their pockets, while the poor and vulnerable are ignored, denigrated and robbed. It is indeed in this case a kind of fraud, a kind of misappropriation. Many of the workers who contribute to the UI fund will not even qualify for benefits. It is robbery, to a certain extent.

Young people starting out may be the most vulnerable of all because, as you know, finding a job and carving out a career nowadays is not the same as when I was young. I am 52 years old. When I was a student in my twenties, jobs were not that hard to find. I am—

[*English*]

An hon. member: Is this the short answer?

Mr. Marchand: The government needs a lot of detailed explanation, which is what I am trying to do.

[*Translation*]

Young people are facing an increasingly difficult situation, because it is so expensive to go to university to get the education required to find a job. It is already difficult enough just to get a diploma, without facing the prospect of not having any job opportunities upon graduating. This demoralizes young people and causes them to drop out of school in growing numbers.

Both the young and the old are affected, as well as the sick, the most vulnerable, and women. Everyone is affected by the measures taken by this government because, as I said, there is no social policy in any way, shape or form. That is incredible. Instead of running the country as it should, the government is sitting on its power and letting itself be led by rich individuals, corporations and banks, in spite of the fact that, in a former life, when in opposition, the Liberal Party found much fault with banks, accusing them of ruining the economy.

• (1330)

A few years ago, as incredible as it may sound, the Prime Minister, who was the leader of the opposition then, warned: “When I become the Prime Minister, you can be sure you will have to pay your share.” That is more or less what he told banks. And he was right.

Today, banks are charging—

An hon. member: \$5 billion.

Mr. Marchand: That is right, last year, they made \$5.2 billion in profits. They certainly are not poor. They are charging almost 20 per cent in interest on credit card balances. It takes some doing. That is incredible. As rich as they are, banks are doing what they can to become even richer.

Recently, the Liberal government denied banks access to the insurance sector. I must admit that they were served a warning. Perhaps their next request will be granted, like automobile leasing

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for example, which is extremely profitable. Perhaps the Liberal government will decide to give them a nice little present.

Of course it is in the best interest of this government that the six federally chartered banks make huge profits. It is well known that they do make profits. They are doing well and the government will make sure that they can expand into other areas.

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has expired. Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to continue?

Resuming debate.

Mr. Boudria: I have a question, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for questions and comments is over. Is there unanimous consent to extend the period by a few minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question about what the member opposite just said.

I wish to understand his opinion on the issue of leasing contracts. Is he saying that he favours Ford Motors Credit over the National Bank of Canada?

Mr. Marchand: Mr. Speaker, I can answer. First, I wish to thank the hon. member for his question.

The problem that I was discussing before concerned the banks, and how we could prevent them from getting more powerful. General Motors Acceptance Corporation and Ford Motors Credit are American investment agencies. These companies are exactly like banks. In the U.S. today, Ford Motors is the sixth biggest financial institution.

If the hon. member makes a small verbal distinction between Ford Motors and GM, I do not think it matters, especially since they are American companies.

In my opinion, in Canada, we should crack down a little harder on the banks, but not on companies, like car dealerships, that provide jobs and make a profit. Why amend legislation once again to benefit banks, at the expense of those in the automobile industry who have a hard time making ends meet? Life is not always easy. Unlike banks, car dealers do not pocket profits of \$5.2 billion, year in year out. This is definitely not the case.

I hope that answers the hon. member's question. If I had more time, I could elaborate on that social concept. There is a difference. The question was put by a member who is indeed a francophone. This lack of social concept within the federal government may reflect a difference in the English Canadian perception, versus the French Canadian one.

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• (1335)

In Quebec, the concept of distinct society implies a social policy. We have a social policy, and I challenge anyone in this House to claim that, in Quebec, we favour the banks. This is absolutely not the case. We will never favour the banks in Quebec. We treat them fairly, but we also ask them to contribute to the province's financial and economic recovery.

The federal government does not do that. This is a big difference in terms of social policy. This is not the way things are done in our province. As you know, the caisses Desjardins were established in Quebec and they are very successful. These institutions provide extensive quality services without making exorbitant profits like the banks.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-11 this morning. It was said that it is an administrative bill. I do not think so. I would call it a pernicious bill. Why? Because it will increase federal involvement in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

Far from indicating a withdrawal of the federal government from the manpower training area, it will increase its involvement. We will again see duplication and overlap, although Bloc Québécois members were elected to condemn duplication and overlap in the area of manpower training, among others.

Therefore, this bill is pernicious and the government has no other choice but to withdraw it because the population of Quebec does not want it. The population of Quebec does not want it for the simple reason that it does not show respect for democracy nor for the people of Quebec which has been asking that the Quebec government be the only one in charge of manpower training and employment.

The population of Quebec does not want this bill, and I am not only talking about individuals. Many of my colleagues mentioned, this morning, several organizations that have reached a consensus on the issue of manpower training and job creation. There is a consensus in Quebec, but I do not think the government understands the intentions and the concerns of Quebec.

I am talking not only about individuals, but also about editorial writers, intellectuals, unionists and workers. When we examine the positions of Lise Bissonnette and Jean-Robert Sansfaçon, of the FTQ, the CSN and the CEQ, of the bishop of Bathurst, of the Canadian Labour Congress, of the Acadian mayors and municipalities, and of the labour council, we see that this view is held not only in Quebec, but that other provinces are also asking for withdrawal.

However, we, in Quebec, want all the moneys related to manpower training to be returned to the provincial authorities. This bill is pernicious. A clause by clause examination of the bill shows how

the federal government will abuse its power. Why? I will explain a few clauses of the bill.

How will the human resources development minister assign the management of the programs he wants to establish? If money is handed out to individuals or agencies, who will be responsible for the management of these programs?

That is why we are saying that this minister and his department will increase their spending power, and their ability to encroach upon provincial jurisdictions. That is clear.

• (1340)

There is a consensus on this, and I cannot figure out why the government cannot understand what Quebec wants. It wants to get the money and powers to finally introduce a comprehensive social policy. When we talk about employment, we also talk about unemployment and welfare. Unemployment insurance is not just unemployment insurance anymore.

A commission will be created and will include the word "insurance", so the government will be able to further intrude into provincial jurisdictions. By offering this "insurance", the government will be able to determine the type of program, local institution or community network. That is what I call piecemeal management of unemployment insurance. Incidentally, many of my colleagues have pointed out that the federal government is no longer paying into the unemployment insurance fund. That does not prevent it from trying to have its way in unemployment insurance and employment assistance programs.

You are aware of the \$5 billion surplus the federal government got its hands on in order to bring down its deficit or perhaps to play Santa with certain community institutions. Community organizations in my riding too would like some of that money to be able to help out those most in need.

This bill does not reflect the will of Quebecers. This is about unemployment insurance, but the words will be changed to employment insurance. Why do we say this bill is so harmful? Because, unlike his colleagues, this minister will not have to report annually on his department's activities. How will we be able to check on the government and the money it gets from the taxpayers if this department is not held accountable? No annual report will be tabled, none. This bill reinforces the powers of the minister and his department.

I am concerned about how the policies and programs will be managed once the money has been distributed. I am concerned about the issue of confidentiality once agencies have been designated to manage these policy programs. I urge the government to agree to what the people concerned are asking for. You will not find only sovereignists among these people, as we have said several

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times in committee and in the House, but mainly people who have reached a social consensus on the issue of labour training. I have a lot of difficulty accepting the fact that the federal government is withholding \$5 billion from the Unemployment Insurance Fund, money paid in part by the taxpayers, employees and employers, of Quebec, when this money is needed to implement a real employment policy in sync with social reality.

Meanwhile, as the President of the Treasury Board told us himself, the government will be very pleased to release very shortly a pamphlet explaining to the people of Quebec that only the government of Canada, the federal government, can provide them with any guarantee about the future of the social safety net.

• (1345)

The government was sleazy enough to wait for the tabling of the Quebec budget. They thought this budget would not be very popular. After all, who is blamed for the cuts? The Canadian Health and Social Transfer, for example, is being reduced by \$4 billion over three years. This means that the provinces have to cut down health care services. And yet, we are now creating a health care research fund. Still another overlapping, another duplication.

I fail to see the efficiency of such a process. I can give you seven good reasons to withdraw this bill. I also wonder why the government waited until after the referendum to introduce in the House this bill which allows them to take over the direction, implementation and control of social and economic policies. Why?

This bill allows the government to go over the head of the provinces, to interfere directly, as I said, with organizations, municipal governments or individuals, regardless of the provincial jurisdictions.

This will lead to disputes and a lack of social cohesion. That is what my constituents tell me. As the hon. member for Quebec, I am often asked who was the federal member before me, the federal government being so far away. For example, we know what happened when the federal government managed Quebec harbour. We know what happened to cultural activities when the federal built the Old Port in 1984. They put up cement blocks and erected structures that had to be torn down because they were not integrated to the cultural reality, the historic environment of the old port of Quebec City. So we know what happens when, being so detached from the people, the federal government decides for the provinces.

The bill prevents Quebec from implementing a truly integrated social policy. The minister's intervention power will be dangerously increased in matters concerning income security, children, seniors, support for provinces for secondary education, social assistance, labour market adjustment and student loans.

That is why the Bloc is opposed to the bill. The bill also opens the door to privatization, contracting out of certain programs, such as unemployment insurance and the Canada pension plan, for example.

I repeat, the government is giving itself the legal basis enabling it to encroach massively upon provincial fields of jurisdiction. Many of my colleagues have already mentioned this morning, but that is what is going on it bears repeating: the government will encroach upon provincial fields of jurisdiction, such as child care and manpower. That is what I call waste.

The Bloc Quebecois was elected for those reasons. Quite naively, I thought we, the 52 Bloc Quebecois members who were in the House, could convince the federal government to put an end to all these overlaps and encroachments.

On the contrary, what have we seen in the last three years? The speech from the throne contains only new encroaching and overlapping measures. They are trying to make us believe they are decentralizing. But there is no such thing as decentralization without the powers and money that go with it; you do not give powers without the necessary funds. We know very well what can be achieved without funds: not much. With one dollar, you can do so much, with two dollars, you can do a little more, but with three dollars, you can do a lot more.

Transfers to the provinces in the areas of health, post-secondary education and welfare have been cut. We know what is happening: people are very angry.

Once again last weekend I met with some of my constituents. They urged me to ask the government in this House not to go ahead with the proposed reform.

• (1350)

The Bloc Quebecois has done a very good job. We were able to explain to people and to organizations in our ridings how the federal government was hurting the provinces by cutting its transfers. My constituents understand, and I am sure the same is true for all members who have worked in their ridings and who have been able to make the people understand what is going on. Our constituents will not be fooled. They will no longer be fooled. On the contrary, they are well-informed, they read and watch the same news we do.

The news tell us that it is not what we want. We are speaking for Quebec, but I am sure that in other provinces, several ministers and premiers also deplore what is going on.

In this bill, the federal government legitimizes and legalizes the numerous interventions it has made in areas under provincial jurisdiction in the name of its spending power. I think this is clear.

S. O. 31

The Bloc Québécois will fight. Should this bill be passed, we would still continue to inform people, to tell them about the cuts and about the federal government's interference in areas under provincial jurisdiction.

When there is a consensus in a province, that is what we call social unity, and that kind of social unity must be respected and not ignored in this House. This bill is an example of just how the desires of an entire population, federalists, sovereignists, anyone and everyone, can be trampled on. This is what the federal government is being asked, but it turns a deaf ear.

I shall end here, trusting that what I have had to say this morning will have been successful, if not in changing anyone's mind—for I do not believe that the other side of this House is likely to change its mind—at least in making them think of the reality of what is going on in Quebec in the area of manpower training, when the unemployment rate is 11 per cent or more, as it is in my riding. What does it mean if over 11 per cent of people are on welfare?

It means that the provinces will have to assume responsibility for these people as they look for work. Often, these are not true job creation measures, because true job creation measures need to be cohesive and they must involve the various local, social and economic stakeholders.

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for Québec. I am also sorry not to hear from the Liberal government on such an important bill on unemployment insurance.

I too fail to understand how, despite a consensus at all levels in Quebec, this government can still refuse to decentralize its powers to the provinces. Quebec is not the only province calling for decentralization, they all are. We know we are carrying around this debt, which, around 1997-98, will reach \$600 billion with \$50 billion in interest.

Just imagine, if we had \$50 billion a year to invest in job creation, we would not be here debating this bill. We know the debt is simply the result of waste, duplication and the symbols of Canada they have been trying to build in recent years.

• (1355)

My colleague was saying earlier that this government's management style is piecemeal. I would say, rather, that all these programs are much more the government's showcase. What is important for the federal government is to have a showcase in each province to establish its presence. But what is the effect? It serves practically no purpose.

I would ask my colleague to tell me about the advantage, not only for Quebec but for all the provinces, of having only one employment window with all the powers and the costs and the

money and of not being constantly stymied by these national directives.

Mrs. Gagnon (Québec): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks and his question. I could simply say that this government does not understand the meaning of the words decentralization and deregulation. When the government wants to ignore the provinces and negotiate agreements directly with local organizations and institutions, it is indeed because it wants to have a window. It insists upon having its place next to the Government of Quebec or the government of another province to show that, with its little grants, it will get a little recognition.

As for what the result of all this would be, the answer I would give my colleague is another word to which this government is probably allergic: efficiency. That is what we would get. I think that, if we had the money and the programs, this is the policy we would like to implement in Quebec, a policy that is agreed upon by sovereignists and federalists alike in that province. I hope the government will finally understand that the views we express in this House are not sovereignist views, but the views of the people of Quebec and of stakeholders in the social and economic fields in that province.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Colleagues, with your permission I will call it two o'clock.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CANUSA FOODS LIMITED

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the president of Mountain View Packers, Mr. Byron McGrath, and his company directors who have accepted a new challenge to join forces with Tri-Winner Irving Acres Inc. of Presque Isle, Maine. Together these two companies last Friday announced the creation of a new company, CANUSA Foods Limited in Centreville, New Brunswick.

This merger will signal the new company to begin construction this spring on a value added processing plant providing an additional 25 jobs for the region.

Last Friday's announcement proves once again that confidence and good aggressive business management, coupled with strategic government support, helps to create more jobs for Canadians and in this case in the riding of Carleton—Charlotte.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in an issue of *Entre parenthèses*, Impératif français reminds us that in the federal government, English is the real working language.

It says that 22.8 per cent of management positions are held by francophones whereas 32.8 per cent of support positions are filled by francophones. In other words, the higher you go on the salary scale, the less room there is for francophones.

Impératif français also points out that the federal government is more bilingual in Quebec. While the English minority in Quebec forms only 10 per cent of the population, 52.7 per cent of positions in the federal public service are bilingual.

Moreover, according to the most recent statistics issued by the Treasury Board, in 1994-95, 88 per cent of translation done in the federal government was from English into French, or roughly the same proportion as 10 years ago. Impératif français is quite right: in Canada, 25 years after the coming into force of the Official Languages Act, English is more official than French.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Reform Party and all Canadians, I would like to express my sorrow and shock that a UN base sheltering refugees was shelled by Israeli forces today resulting in many deaths and injuries.

This tragic occurrence must be condemned by everyone. Although Israelis said it was an accident, this does not make it acceptable. Civilians being sheltered by the UN must not only avoid being targeted but combatants must avoid them in all circumstances.

This tragedy points to the futility and destructiveness of the recent violence. I urge Israel, Lebanon and Syria to immediately begin around the clock negotiations to solve this conflict. Humanity demands that they act now to sort out their differences and make sure such tragic events never happen again.

* * *

CUBA

Mr. Stan Dromisky (Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian book publishing companies have been more than generous with university students in Cuba.

Recently I sent requests to approximately 600 publishing companies across Canada for donations of Canadiana. These books are

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for the library at the recently established department of Canadian studies at the University of Havana.

The response has been tremendous. On a daily basis we are receiving eight to ten boxes of books. These donations are a clear example of the sympathy that Canadians have for the struggle faced by the people and students of Cuba. We should continue to do all that we can to help this island nation overcome the hardships imposed upon it by the unjust embargo.

I congratulate the Canadian book publishing industry for its gracious support. The people of Cuba are truly grateful. They are once again reminded of the generosity and humanity for which Canadians are known worldwide.

* * *

PORTAGE PROGRAM

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House the Portage program currently operating in Lac Echo just north of Montreal. This program is a therapeutic community based treatment program for young people between the ages of 14 and 19 experiencing substance abuse problems along with significant difficulties in their personal growth.

The community supports the individual's efforts in living up to personal obligations and encourages progress. This is done in the context of a series of groups where achievements are reviewed and new challenges set.

Portage is widely recognized as one of the most successful and cost effective programs in existence for rehabilitating substance abusers. Globally the program boasts that 85 per cent of graduates remain drug free.

Atlantic Canada is in need of this kind of therapy program as many of those in need of treatment have been travelling to the U.S. for rehab.

I am encouraged that Portage will soon be bringing its expertise to Fredericton. I urge the Government of Canada to support it in that effort.

* * *

SPEAK OUT CANADA

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville—Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Gloria and Harold Williams who reside in my riding of Oakville—Milton.

Motivated by the events of the October referendum in Quebec, Mr. and Mrs. Williams along with 24 of their friends founded Speak Out Canada, a non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots community group dedicated to keeping Canada united.

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Since December 1995 their organization has grown considerably with over 200 volunteer members. It is encouraging and assisting the formation of other unity groups across the country.

They have adopted an extensive agenda for the immediate and long term future, including planning unity oriented events and organizing discussion quorums. Their ultimate goal is to reach out to their fellow Canadians through links with other grassroots organizations to promote an increased awareness of our country and the benefits of working together to keep us united and strong.

I commend Mr. and Mrs. Williams for their efforts and I wish them ongoing success.

* * *

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite the commitment and the promises made by the Prime Minister of Canada to renew the Canadian Constitution to better take into account the traditional and legitimate claims of Quebec, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is proposing various constitutional pas-de-deux to repair the damage made in 1982 by the present Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister's promises, which all in all do not amount to a great deal, are already too much for some premiers. Trial balloons, reversals, spectacular parades, such is the agenda proposed by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to please English Canada. Does the minister believe that Quebecers are so blind that they cannot see through his real game?

The people of Quebec are not fooled by the minister's trickeries and will not let him pull wool over their eyes.

* * *

ALBERTA FRANCOPHONES

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in 1861, the St. Albert mission was created by Father Albert Lacombe and about twenty Metis families. Together, they built the first school, the first bridge and the first hospital in Alberta.

Still today, francophones in Alberta enrich our communities. In 1994, the franco-albertan newspaper *Le Franco* received several awards from the Association de la presse francophone. Everywhere in Alberta, French teaching through immersion programs is a remarkable success.

I am proud to have among the St. Albert constituents an active francophone population that follows Father Lacombe's tradition and fully participates in the development of our community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Congratulations!

* * *

[*English*]

FISHERIES

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today there are representatives of 500,000 coastal British Columbians on Parliament Hill. They have come here because they feel their Liberal MPs for British Columbia have let them down, have betrayed them, have turned their backs on them.

The so-called Mifflin plan will destroy coastal communities and take jobs out of thousands of British Columbia households. It will do nothing for conservation of the stock. It will do nothing to enhance the salmon and other fisheries on the west coast. Yet the minister is determined to continue with a program that will destroy the communities and the lives of people.

I say to my Liberal British Columbia friends opposite, is it not time that you stood up for British Columbia as opposed to the government centred here in Ottawa?

* * *

FARMING

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize a P.E.I. farm leader who has given much of his life to the farm movement.

Urban Laughlin of Sherbrooke, P.E.I. was elected last week for his 20th one-year term as district director of district one, region one of the National Farmers Union.

Urban's dedication and that of his wife Mary to the concerns of primary producers and the family farm in my opinion is unsurpassed.

Mr. Laughlin has always taken a very principled position on farm issues within his organization and in farm policy circles. The motto "Farmers are Important" is emphasized time and time again. His voice has been important in providing focus to debates and alternatives to the open market approach to marketing, thereby forcing policymakers to keep farmers in mind in their decision making.

I offer my congratulations and his continued success as a farm leader.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the International Monetary Fund expects that the growth of the Canadian economy should continue to improve in the next two years, reaching an annual rate of 2.9 per cent in 1997.

Among the G-7 countries, only Japan would outmatch this performance. So, Canada's economic situation has greatly improved since our government was elected.

The IMF also points out, and I quote: "Following the October referendum in Quebec, the level of confidence improved and interest rates went down significantly."

The people of Quebec and Canada had long felt what the IMF is telling us. Quebec separation has extremely negative impacts on the economy. It is high time for the PQ to put this option aside if it really wants to contribute to the economic recovery.

* * *

• (1410)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Normex Telecom, created almost 25 years ago by its president, Jacques Coutellier, has just been acquired by an Alberta company called In-Flight Phone Canada Inc. Following this acquisition, the company will be in a better position to become the leader in the communication cable installation industry in Canada.

Normex revenues, which totalled \$7 million in 1995, are expected to exceed \$60 million in three years because of this transaction and to help create more than 300 new jobs in the high technology industry in Montreal itself.

We are very pleased about this transaction, which confirms Montreal's leadership in the North American telecommunications industry. We hope that Canadians from all over the country will follow the example set by this transaction and continue to work together to develop a more prosperous and dynamic economy for all Canadians.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Cliff Breitkreuz (Yellowhead, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on April 10 at 5.30 a.m., armed men surrounded and stormed the Manitoba farm home of the Desrochers.

One wonders, was the family harbouring foreign criminals, was it engaged in smuggling activities or was it in Canada illegally? No. Norman Desrocher had dared to do the unthinkable. He sold his barley to the Americans without obtaining permission from the granddaddy of the prairies, the Canadian Wheat Board. It took 14 state employees, one-third of them well armed, to seize a legally owned grain truck.

Compare this action to the border south of Ottawa where smuggling is a 24-hour a day business. Is this equality of the law? On the Dakota border a family is terrorized by government agents. On the New York border the government does nothing. When will

this cowardly government begin to apply the law equally and fairly?

* * *

REFORM PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have bad news for the House today. A recent poll commissioned by the member for Edmonton Southwest shows that even in Alberta Canadians think the ideas of the Reform Party are too extreme. How can that be?

Is it possible that Canadians see the study of caning as too extreme? Could it be that supporting the dismantling of health care by the Reform Party is a bit too harsh? Interestingly enough, 64 per cent of the people surveyed were impressed with our Prime Minister. The poll was strangely silent on what people felt about the leader of the Reform Party. I wish they had asked that question.

I have bad news for Reformers. Polls are not very good for them. Perhaps they will be smiling more if they read them less.

* * *

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Council of the regional county municipalities of Rivière-du-Loup, Témiscouata, Kamouraska, Des Basques, Rimouski—Neigette, Matane, Pabos, Côte-de-Gaspé and Bonaventure have all sent a request to the federal government, asking for nothing less than the withdrawal of the bill concerning the unemployment insurance reform.

The RCMs point out the negative impact the reform proposed by the Minister of Human Resources Development will have. They are referring to the measures affecting seasonal workers. They think that the rules restricting the workers' eligibility or requesting 910 hours to become eligible to UI benefits for the first time will only help to promote the underground economy.

These people are not professional agitators, as the minister has suggested, but rather the mayors of these various regional county municipalities, speaking on behalf of the people who elected them.

I think that the minister should realize that the regions affected by the reform will not accept token changes. The government will have to go back to the drawing board.

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[English]

MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, those proudly serving in the armed forces are disgusted at the way the defence minister has disregarded the principles of integrity, duty, respect and decency. I remind the minister and Liberal MPs that these are the trademarks of every man and woman serving in

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uniform, not the litany of irresponsibility, contempt and cover-up which plagues the Somalia inquiry for which this minister refuses to accept responsibility.

As a retired soldier with service in many areas, I have seen cowardly actions but usually it is by Canada's enemies and not Canada's own. I cannot condone the cheap shots from the defence minister as he questions the loyalty of Reform MPs to our military merely to deflect criticism of his own incompetence.

Until the minister puts on a uniform, he has no right to lecture me or any member on principled behaviour, integrity or even on being un-Canadian.

* * *

• (1415)

EARTH DAY

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York—Simcoe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Monday, April 22 is Earth Day. Millions of Canadians will take part in grassroots celebrations and events from St. John's to the Gulf Islands to Cambridge Bay.

Earth Day is an international event. It is the largest celebration of environmental awareness and action in the world. Earth Day is a day of hope, action, responsibility and celebration.

The best example of celebration and hope is the Ekokids Club. This year Earth Day Canada hopes to see 1,000 Ekokids Clubs across the country. Thousands of Canadian children have shown leadership in environmental action. As parents we must stand with our children. A clean environment today ensures the health of future generations.

I urge all Canadians to join in local Earth Day celebrations and renew our commitment to the preservation of the planet.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, historically, Quebec has always been penalized when it came to federal research and development spending. The proof of this is that, from 1979 to 1991, Quebec received only 18.6 per cent of federal funding in this area, while Ontario received 50 per cent. These funds create many jobs and are highly stimulating to the economy.

This is an area in which Quebec would like to have its fair share. It is certainly more positive on the economic level for our tax dollars to come back to us for research and development instead of unemployment insurance.

My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. How, under these circumstances, can she justify her department's choice of priorities in cutting off funding for the Tokamak project in Varennes, when this adds to the inequity from which Quebec has suffered far too long already in R&D?

[*English*]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated in this House before, this government confronted with a significant fiscal crisis has been forced to make very difficult choices. We have to set priorities as a government.

We are an energy rich nation and I am sure the hon. member appreciates that fact. In this energy rich nation, unfortunately fusion research is not a priority. Therefore, when asked to reduce my department's budget by some 60 per cent over three and one-half to four years, we had to set priorities. We set priorities and unfortunately fusion was not one of them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister justify her decision to end investments in the Tokamak project without any consultation with her partners, including the Government of Quebec, despite the fact that they funded 50 per cent of the project?

[*English*]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I come back to the point that we have to make choices and we have to set priorities. In this country we have done that in relation to energy research.

I am not suggesting that fusion research does not have a place. I am sure that the people who do this work do good work. Unfortunately it is not a priority when we look at the other energy sources this nation possesses.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I feel obliged to tell the minister that everyone in Quebec is opposed to her decision and would offer as proof the unanimous resolution by the National Assembly condemning her decision. That makes it twice this week that the federal government has managed to turn Quebec unanimously against it.

How can the minister persist with her decision to cut off her \$7.5 million involvement in the Varennes basic research project, in which she is involved with other partners, while last June she added \$15 million to the TRIUMF project in B.C.? This is also a basic

research project, and one in which the federal government is the sole investor. Why cut back in Quebec, where there is already an R&D deficit, while stepping up investment elsewhere?

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the hon. member that my department has not contributed any funding to the TRIUMPH project.

Let me come back to the basic point. Government, especially in these difficult fiscal times, is about choices and setting priorities. We all must do this. The government has set those priorities.

My department, facing a 60 per cent reduction, set priorities and made choices. In this country fusion as a possible energy source is not a research priority.

* * *

[Translation]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last night we heard on the news that the government was on the verge of announcing that it has reached an agreement with the maritime provinces on the goods and services tax. Under this agreement, these provinces would receive \$1 billion in compensation from the federal government.

Can the minister confirm that such an agreement has been reached and, more importantly, that \$1 billion will be paid to the maritime provinces as compensation?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are negotiating with several provinces. This being said, there is no final agreement to date. When we have one, I will be pleased to make an announcement in this House.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware that, if indeed the maritime provinces receive compensation, he will be asking Canadians in the other provinces to pay for it out of their own money? He will reach into their pockets to compensate for a tax people in the maritimes will no longer be paying. This is quite a present.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if ever there were compensation, it would be for losses incurred. As a matter of fact, if we look at federal adjustment programs, as in the case of the Crow benefit, even if they were adjustments in transportation subsidies to the Atlantic provinces and Quebec, adjustments were made.

This is what our country is all about, the federal government together with the people of Canada provide assistance to those

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regions or parts of the country in need. Is the member saying that when compensation was specifically geared to Quebec, it should have been denied? I believe this to be a rather absurd notion Quebecers would find totally unacceptable.

* * *

[English]

SOMALIA INQUIRY

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

Chief of Defence Staff Boyle is up to his ears in the Somalia scandal cover-up, and yet the defence minister continues to allow Boyle to act as suspect, star witness, judge and jury in the Somalia affair.

Will the defence minister, in the name of fairness and justice, ask Boyle, who should never have been made chief of defence staff in the first place, to step aside until the Somalia inquiry gets to the bottom of this whole affair?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the name of fairness and justice, the hon. member should allow the inquiry to do its job.

It is quite alarming when the hon. member comes to the House day after day and attacks a hard working public servant who is unable to come into the Chamber and defend himself.

The chief of defence staff will be able to give all of his views on matters relevant to Somalia when the commission begins its hearings. That is the way Canadians expect justice to be handled, not by answering such libelled questions coming from the hon. member day after day.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I do not blame the chief of defence staff. I blame the Minister of National Defence for this mess.

• (1425)

Canadians will not be surprised if the defence minister refuses to take any action against his friend Jean Boyle. The defence minister and the Prime Minister could not have appointed Boyle as chief of defence staff with the recommendation of the privy council office.

Will the minister admit that the privy council office had serious reservations about Boyle's suitability for the position of chief of defence staff? Can he tell the House what concerns the office expressed and why he rejected them?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is absolute nonsense. I ask him, with all

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decency, to cease and desist these horrible personal attacks on a man who is serving Canada with distinction.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in view of the attempted cover-up of data relevant to the Somalia inquiry, the Somalia inquiry had to shut down this week. The commissioners continue to be concerned about the integrity of the documents they received from the minister's department and they are now concerned about the integrity of the work the commission is able to do.

When will the minister accept responsibility for this entire scandal and cover-up and resign?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, most Canadians understand that when one gives the answer no, one means no. Obviously the Reform Party cannot understand that barest of two-letter words.

With respect to the question of documentation, the department has met the deadline established by the commission. The commission is now evaluating the department's response. The commission, I assume, will have something to say about this tomorrow.

The commission will have to decide if it still requires documents essential to its work which have not yet surfaced. Then it is its job as a commission, quoting the terms of reference, "to investigate all matters, including allegations of cover-up and destruction of evidence". The matter is for the commission to investigate and to decide what has happened to those documents.

* * *

[Translation]

VARENNES CENTRE FOR MAGNETIC FUSION

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

For some weeks now, Quebec has been trying to reason with the Minister of Natural Resources. In a letter dated April 2, three Quebec ministers argued that the Canadian Centre for Magnetic Fusion represents one of the biggest scientific projects ever undertaken in the province of Quebec and asked the Minister of Natural Resources to reconsider her decision.

Does the minister realize that her decision to cut off the \$7.5 million federal contribution to the Tokamak project in Varennes will entail the loss of about 100 high tech jobs in Quebec, including some 40 international level research jobs in greater Montreal, and will jeopardize the future of a centre of excellence set up in Quebec and recognized world wide?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before in the House, government

involves setting priorities and making difficult choices. Unfortunately expenditures on fusion by the government at this time are not a priority.

The hon. member talks about high tech jobs and benefits for the province of Quebec. As I have already mentioned to him on a number of occasions, Candu research by AECL and the sale of one Candu reactor in the export market potentially delivers \$100 million worth of economic benefits to the province of Quebec. It delivers 4,000 potential person hours of employment to the province of Quebec.

I come back to the point I made before that government is about choices. One of our choices is to develop the export market for the Candu reactor. That will lead to significant economic opportunities and high tech, high skilled jobs for the province of Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is reminding us of the benefits the province of Quebec is getting from CANDU. She should know that these benefits amount only to 12 per cent, well under what Quebec should receive in benefits.

• (1430)

The minister always talks about priorities. The province of Quebec is sick of paying for this government's priorities. Quebec has had enough of the federal government making miserly economies at its expense.

Given the unanimous motion passed yesterday in the Quebec National Assembly and the overwhelming negative impact the minister's decision will have on the economy of Quebec and on its international reputation in fundamental research, will the minister agree to reconsider her decision and to reinstate the \$7.5 million federal subsidy that can save the Tokamak project in Varennes?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talks about concepts like fair share and priorities. My department spends 25 per cent of its R and D budget in the province Quebec. That is proportionate to the population of the province of Quebec. We spend that R and D in part in areas that are an energy priority for the country such as energy efficiency, renewable energy and remote community energy efficiency.

As a department we do more than our fair share in the province of Quebec, and that money is spent on the government's priorities.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the GST issue has come to a head.

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During the election the Liberals campaigned up and down streets promising that if they were elected the GST would meet its end. That was then, this is now.

I want the finance minister to make something very clear for Canadians and for the House. Was it his position that when they were campaigning on doorsteps around the country they were telling Canadians that if elected they would spend \$1 billion to permanently weld into place the most hated tax in Canadian history by integrating it with the sales taxes of the Atlantic provinces? Is that what he expects Canadians to believe?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our position during the election campaign was set out very clearly on page 22 of the red book. I suggest the member read it. It talks about ease of administration, it talks about simplification, it talks about harmonization with the provinces. It talks about making the tax system more responsive to consumers and to small businesses, which is clearly the intention of the government.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the finance minister expects Canadians to believe that when his own caucus does not even believe it. That is why it is voting against him.

The finance minister knows there are many Liberals in the government who would not be sitting where they are today if they had not promised their faces off that the GST would be gone under a Liberal government.

Why does the finance minister not just ask for the public's forgiveness and admit the Liberals made a promise they knew they could not possibly meet?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how many members of the Reform Party does the member think would have been elected if they had known that last year Reform would come forth with a budget which would eviscerate medicare?

How many members of the Reform Party would have been elected if they had known Reform would virtually eliminate the old age pension? How many members of the Reform Party would have been elected had they known that what this party really stands for is old age pensions for the rich but nothing for the poor and had they known it would cut transfers?

How many members of the Reform Party would have been elected if the true colours of that party and the divisions that have been made manifest had been clear to them at the time of the election?

* * *

[Translation]

LEBANON

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The conflict in Lebanon is getting worse. Today, the Israeli army attacked a refugee camp under UN protection. Sixty-eight people, mainly civilians, including children, and also UN peacekeepers, are reported to have been killed. Although Israel did acknowledge its mistake, the fact remains that such mistakes are unforgivable and could be repeated as long as the conflict rages on.

• (1435)

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs intend to intervene with the Israeli government as soon as possible to demand an immediate ceasefire?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government and the people of Canada, I wish to express our deep sympathy and regret to the families of the victims and the people of Lebanon. This morning's attacks, which killed civilians, including children, and members of the UN peacekeeping mission, are unacceptable to Canada.

We called a meeting with the Israeli chargé d'affaires to convey this message. We asked for a ceasefire, a cessation of hostilities, and the reinforcement of the peace process in Lebanon.

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, can the minister undertake to intervene with the UN to have the Security Council present Israel and Lebanon with a plan for a lasting peace?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the suggestion from the hon. member. The security council will take up this matter sometime this afternoon based on a resolution from the Egyptians.

We are not at present a member of the security council. However, I will certainly have our ambassador there make the position of the Canadian government known, as I have stated it.

There is a meeting scheduled for Monday in Luxemburg of all the foreign ministers whose governments were part of the Sharm el Sheikh meeting a month ago involving a number of Arab states, Israel, the Palestinians and us.

We will use that forum as well to express our strong concern about the attacks, to put in place actions against terrorism, to promote the development of peace and to initiate the kinds of aid or assistance which my colleague, the Minister for International Co-Operation, is working on to help the development of the peace process in the West Bank, for the Palestinian authorities and in Israel itself.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in seeking the leadership of the Liberal Party, the finance minister said he would get rid of the GST. He further stated on March 6, 1990 it

Oral Questions

would be difficult to do that if the federal tax becomes integrated with provincial taxes.

If harmonization was bad then, why is it not bad now?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, harmonization obviously leads to a better tax for consumers and for small business.

With a harmonized tax one still has all of the flexibility required to administer the tax system both at the federal level and the provincial levels.

I cannot believe the hon. member is actually suggesting we should not try to rationalize the system, that we should not try to reduce the costs, that we should not try to develop a tax system that would be far more efficient and make us far more competitive as we face the opposition that exists outside our borders, not inside.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I guess the short version of that answer is he is now enlightened.

Not all the Atlantic provinces have jumped on the harmonization band wagon. The MLAs of Prince Edward Island are seeking further input because, to quote one, "a blended levy would broaden the tax base moving into areas not currently taxed by the PST such as electricity, heating oil, drugs, some clothing and footwear, equipment for the physically challenged and textbooks".

Is this what the finance minister wants to do, tax the physically challenged?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if one takes a look at the GST one will see there is an extensive line of rebates to take care of physically disadvantaged people or lower income people. This is a great advantage that exists within the GST that does not exist within the PST.

Mr. Speaker—

• (1440)

Mr. Silye: Do not choke on your own words.

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard): It was a rough trip to Thailand.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Miss Grey: What happened in China?

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard): I am sorry, Jim. This is not working out well for either one of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Just stay tuned. We may come back to it some day.

* * *

[Translation]

COAST GUARD

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Those concerned continue to oppose the coast guard's new fee structure. One of the major points raised by a majority of stakeholders is that, if the minister goes ahead without measuring the impact of the new fee structure, our marine sector will become less competitive vis-à-vis the U.S.

Does the Deputy Prime Minister admit that the coast guard's new service fee structure will not apply to ships using the St. Lawrence Seaway to deliver their cargoes to American ports on the Great Lakes?

[English]

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the actions of the ministry are based on very careful consultation with the industry, based on the principle of user pay, user say.

I should, however, remind the House and the hon. member that this matter is now the subject of an inquiry by a parliamentary committee which is currently sitting. It will complete its very extensive hearing of witnesses from all parts of the country this afternoon and will write a report this evening.

The minister has engaged himself to read the report, to wait on it before making decisions. It would be a lack of conformity to the comity that the government owes to this House and its parliamentary committees to attempt to anticipate the report. Therefore, further statements should wait until the minister has read the report.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, allow me to put a second question to the Deputy Prime Minister, as the commissioner himself continues to express his views on this matter.

Since fees will be charged to the ships going to Canadian ports but not to those bound for the U.S., does the Deputy Prime Minister recognize that the new fee structure threatens to divert marine traffic to U.S. ports?

[English]

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat more succinctly what I have just said. The question is out of order, the matter being before a parliamentary committee which is to report and the minister must properly wait on that.

However, the evidence given to the committee, I would suggest, is at variance with the facts as presented by the hon. member.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Oral Questions

The Freshwater Institute in Winnipeg and the Canadian Centre for Inland Waters in Burlington are facing severe budget cuts, threatening one of Canada's greatest assets, namely fresh water.

Can the minister commit to maintaining the 1993-94 funding levels of these two internationally renowned institutions for fresh water science?

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Davenport for his question.

Members of the House will know the distinction the hon. member has earned by his years of service.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. McWhinney: No one has spoken more eloquently before the House and in international arenas in support of principles of environmental protection and conservation of scarce natural resources.

The hon. member will understand that the government is committed as a top priority to reducing the deficit, to balancing the budget. Our treasurer has brought in a magnificent budget that has commanded general support. This has involved, however, in the interests of achieving that, across the board economies in all departments imposed.

• (1445)

Consistent with this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): With the greatest of respect, the hon. member for Skeena.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The Government of Canada has provided hundreds of millions of dollars to the east coast fishery through a variety of programs for the last decade.

Recently the minister announced an \$80 million licence buy-back in British Columbia. He is aware that virtually all of this money was contributed by west coast fishermen through licence fee increases they have had to pay for the past 25 years.

Can the minister of fisheries explain the disparity of treatment between the east and west coast fishing industries by his department where billions of dollars are dedicated to the east coast but only \$80 million is dedicated to the west coast, which is really only a return of fishermen's contributions in the first place?

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situations on the east coast and the west coast are not cognate. On the east coast we face the disappearance of an industry and the loss of 40,000 jobs.

The situation on the west coast is one that involves a crisis in the year 1996 with the expectation that the industry will get back to better times in 1997 and 1998.

The measures taken by the government have been taken with the advice of a round table of 70 people representing all segments of the industry. We believe they are enough to carry us through this difficult time.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister has tried to determine how many jobs on the west coast will be lost as a result of his plan.

There is a delegation of people here from British Columbia today representing half a million British Columbians who are very concerned about their future and the future of their communities in the wake of the minister's plan. These people participated in these round table discussions and state unequivocally that their recommendations in that process were ignored.

Can the minister explain how it is that although he claims wide consultations with all the stakeholders, there is a delegation representing half a million British Columbians here today demanding that he withdraw this plan? Will he listen to them and do so?

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to assure the hon. member that I have met with this delegation today on behalf of the minister. I believe, after a number of years of experience outside Parliament, that I am good at listening to representations.

The government is very concerned with the fate of the industry on the west coast. Urgent measures are being taken to meet the situation in 1996. The plan put into operation, about which we are still receiving advice and looking for advice, will carry us to the better times in 1997 and 1998.

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[Translation]

TRAN TRIEU QUAN

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Tran Trieu Quan, a Canadian citizen, is still rotting in a Vietnamese prison. We learned this morning that the Office of the Prime Minister knew the whereabouts of Paul Morgan. Moreover, Excel Cotton, a company owned by Mr. Morgan, submitted its financial statements to Canada's Department of Industry last January.

Why is it that, while both the current Minister of Foreign Affairs and his predecessor claim to have been looking into this matter for more than a year, the federal government hid from Mr. Quan's family and the Vietnamese authorities the fact that they knew where Mr. Morgan was?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is hiding nothing. All the information we had was shared with the lawyers of the family, the family itself and with the respective authorities.

This is a matter of very serious consequence. I have watched with some dismay the statements of the hon. member who rather than trying to provide a solution simply tries to provoke more misrepresentation and misinformation.

• (1450)

If we are going to find a solution to this problem we should be working together, not trying to provoke the kind of uninformed reaction the hon. member is promoting.

[Translation]

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is apparently about to announce the appointment of a special advisor to deal with cases such as that of Mr. Quan. But his colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, stated yesterday that there was nothing more that the federal government could do to resolve this matter.

How credible are the minister's alleged initiatives, given that his remarks are contradicted by his own colleague's statements and that the government keeps developing trade relations with Vietnam without demanding that human rights be respected, as they should be in Mr. Quan's case?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in any one year some four to five million Canadians travel abroad in a wide variety of circumstances. In most cases when they need assistance it is provided through the consular services of the government. From time to time there are special or difficult cases where people get entrapped in local laws, requirements and regulations.

For that reason I am announcing today that we have set up a special adviser on consular matters who will take on the responsibility for dealing with the kinds of cases on an active-proactive basis such as the Quan case or the Spencer-Lamont case so that we can provide the full attention of government. That as much as anything else demonstrates our real commitment to ensure the full protection of the rights of Canadian citizens when they go abroad.

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the Deputy Prime Minister said it was the policy of the government

to protect the viability of the Canada pension plan for seniors in the long term. That policy was reaffirmed yesterday by the Minister of Human Resources Development.

Yet when I look at the fine print on page 1.16 of the public accounts what do I find? "The government's authority to pay pensions and benefits is limited to the balance in the account."

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Is the government prepared to put its money where its mouth is and demonstrate its commitment to the Canada pension plan by reporting the unfunded liability of \$500 billion in the public accounts of Canada?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the way in which the government provides for its accounts is obviously established by a tradition and also by generally accepted accounting principles established by the auditor general. We will continue to provide for accounts in that way.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that was as an eloquent reply.

The point I am trying to make is that we hear all kinds of verbal commitments from the government, but when we look at the fine print we find out there are all kinds of loopholes for it to escape through and walk away from its obligation to people.

Can the Minister of Finance preserve the Canada pension plan for seniors and maintain their faith in the government's pension plan by putting the unfunded liability in the public accounts of Canada?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comment about my eloquence. After my answer to the member from Calgary I needed that.

The government stands four square behind the Canada pension plan. The unfunded liability, as the member describes it, is a natural consequence of a pay as you go plan. One of the options that is being looked at by the commission is to fund it a great deal more and that is something we will be discussing with the provinces.

The fundamental point is that the government is engaging in these consultations because it supports the Canada pension plan. The government believes it is important to have a Canada pension plan there for all Canadians, not simply wealthy Canadians. The government supports the Canada pension plan because it does not agree with the position of the Reform Party which is to have pensions only for the rich and to leave the poor, poor.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

LEBANON

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The hearts of thousands of Canadians of Lebanese origin are filled with sadness and despair today because of recent events in the Middle East. I was approached by their local leaders.

• (1455)

I would like to know if the minister intends to contact his Israeli and Lebanese counterparts to condemn this carnage and to insist that hostilities should cease and, above all, that resolution 425, which was passed back in 1978, be implemented.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, I met with Lebanese officials. I conveyed to them the Canadian government's concern about the events taking place in southern Lebanon.

We are doing all we can. Today, I sent the Israeli foreign affairs department a letter stating Canada's position against raids on civilian populations in southern Lebanon.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Canada's support for UN Security Council resolution 425.

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RAW MILK CHEESE

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

The Minister of Health and those who attended yesterday's raw milk cheese tasting organized by the Bloc Québécois and several cheese producers were able to see that the various products currently on the market are simply excellent. In that regard, I am pleased to see that the Minister is the picture of health.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Picard: Does the minister realize that, according to data from his own government, the consumption of raw milk cheese has not resulted in any case of poisoning in Canada, unlike several other food items, including cabbage in Nova Scotia? Will the minister also prohibit the sale of cabbage from Nova Scotia?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I accepted the invitation of my colleague. She is quite correct. I did attend a very good reception put on by the producers

of cheese in the province of Quebec. I also shared with my hon. colleague some good wine from the province of Nova Scotia.

As for my side effects, that is probably demonstrable in the answer I am going to give. The information that we have from the scientists has now been put out to the scientific industry and the various experts. They are going to examine it. After their examination, we will then be in a position to make our decision.

I want to thank the hon. member for bringing this issue to our attention. However, I want to say to her and to all hon. members, it is important that we keep our rhetoric down so that we can make the most appropriate decision for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, will the minister realize that there is no problem with raw milk cheese, that the current standards are very adequate, and that the real issue concerns his public servants who have nothing better to do than bug people to justify their employment?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member again raises the question. As the minister responsible for health, it is my duty, my fiduciary obligation, that when scientific evidence and information becomes available I have to share it with the Canadian people and take the appropriate action on that information.

In my view, no minister of health, federally or provincially, can take that scientific information and throw it in the garbage can. It is very important that we examine it. We will examine it thoroughly with all the various experts and we will make the appropriate decision based on scientific information.

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance said once in his career that he would like to eliminate the GST. When one reads the fine print in the red book it says, not so.

The Minister of Finance has said here today that the government wants to guarantee the Canada pension program. When one reads the public accounts, not so.

• (1500)

What will the Minister of Finance do to guarantee to pensioners across Canada that they will have their Canada pension guaranteed most likely in writing by the government and the minister?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to see the hon. member taking interest in the

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preservation of the Canada pension plan. That is the reason we set up, along with the provinces, the consultation process which is now under way.

As the hon. member knows, a number of options are being looked at within that consultation process, one of which is to increase substantially the degree of funding so that it will go from simply a two-year reserve to a much greater degree of funding, which may well be an option the provinces and the federal government will come to. It is premature, but it is one of the things being discussed.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Finance indicate that in follow-up public accounts this unfunded liability will be noted and that the government is prepared to accept it on a long term basis, rather than the present situation where there is not a commitment either by public accounts, as noted, or by the finance minister?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there very clearly is a commitment to the Canada pension plan. It has been stated unequivocally by the government, in terms of young Canadians coming along, that the Canada pension plan will be there for them. That is the purpose of the consultation.

I believe the member's question goes beyond that, that he is talking about the way accounts of this government or any other government are provided. That is a valid debate, the outstanding liabilities of any national government or any provincial government of this country or any other. That certainly is a debate in which we are prepared to engage. It is precisely to deal with those kinds of problems that the government is dealing with the problems the country faces today and also anticipating those in the decades ahead.

* * *

PARKS CANADA

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the heritage minister, responsible for Canada's national parks and historic sites, is about to embark on the implementation of a new employee takeover program that will only result in increased costs, reduced service, lower wages and lost jobs for hundreds of dedicated, long term employees of Parks Canada.

Since she knows that these employees are not supportive of this plan and that if it fails it threatens the very existence of some of our parks and historic sites, is she prepared to postpone these foolhardy plans at least until such time as she has clear evidence of support for her proposal?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a meeting I held yesterday with my assistant deputy minister, in response to the concerns expressed by employees about their futures, I issued a directive that we look at a number of options.

The first option would be to seek further economies, as required under the program review, the possibility of economies from within. The second option would be to pursue a number of expressions of interest by employees interested in takeovers. The third possibility would be to examine whether there might be an application for a strict commercialisation of services which would guarantee employees not only their long term jobs but also their current union status. Those three options are being explored by the department.

Canada was the first country to have a national parks system, and I certainly do not intend to be the minister responsible for in any way impinging on it.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): This brings question period to an end. We will now hear Thursday's question.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as is the custom, I would like to know what is on the agenda for the coming week. I usually put the question to the government House leader or to his assistant. Today, everyone has an opportunity to answer.

[English]

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if necessary, tomorrow and Monday the House will continue with third reading of Bill C-11, concerning HRD reorganization.

When that is completed we will call third reading of Bill C-18, concerning the health department reorganization, and Bill C-19, respecting internal trade.

If these bills are completed we will commence second reading debates of items we have discussed with our friends opposite and which we will discuss further before setting the precise order.

• (1505)

Tuesday will be an allotted day. Also on Tuesday the government intends to introduce the bill implementing the budget and it is our intention to commence second reading debate on that bill on Wednesday.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources Develop-

ment and to amend and repeal certain related acts, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. George Proud (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have the opportunity to speak on Bill C-11.

As hon. members know, the legislation deals essentially with administrative matters regarding the formation of Human Resources Development Canada, better known as HRDC.

The government is surprised that the Bloc Québécois suddenly decided to attack this legislation. There is certainly nothing sinister about it. It contains no new powers and simply reiterates HRDC's existing mandate.

I understand that members opposite are especially concerned about clauses 6, 20 and 21 of the bill. I will begin by dealing with clause 6.

This clause addresses strictly the department's mandate. Apparently there is a misunderstanding that clause 6 would enable the Government of Canada to intrude in provincial jurisdiction. This is definitely not the case.

The hon. members who comprise Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition are reading things into this legislation which are just not there. If members opposite will read the bill carefully they will see it limits the minister's powers to "matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction". That seems clear enough to me. The provision does not give the minister jurisdiction over provincial matters; it does just the opposite.

There is nothing in clause 6 that does not relate to existing programs. It simply combines the existing program mandates from the four former departments which constitute HRDC. There is no subterfuge designed to undermine provincial legislation at all.

The government does not think it necessary to waste Parliament's valuable time spelling out in the bill every detail of every program HRDC is responsible for. Even if we did, something tells me members opposite still would not be satisfied.

Clause 6 of the bill before us sets out the basic objectives of the department: enhancing employment, encouraging equality and promoting social security. These objectives are clearly within the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada.

Members opposite have also raised concerns regarding clause 20 of Bill C-11. This clause allows the minister to enter into agreements with the provinces or with financial institutions or other such bodies. Clause 20 is adapted from section 7 of the employment and immigration department and commission act, from section 6 of the heritage act and from section 5 of the labour act. Under the legislation before the House clause 20 will allow the minister to enter only into agreements similar to those in the past.

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For example, in 1991 the minister of employment signed an agreement with the Government of Quebec. That agreement recognized Quebec's Société québécois du développement de la main d'oeuvre, SQDM, and its vital role in labour force training in that province.

Nevertheless, apparently members opposite still think clause 20 gives the minister too much discretionary power; that is, too much power to reach agreements they think will intrude on all areas of provincial jurisdiction. That is definitely not the case.

Let us look at the wording of clause 20. It states clearly that these agreements are for the purpose of facilitating programs related to "the powers, duties and functions referred to in section 6". This clause sets out the minister's mandate. There is nothing new in it, nor does it create any new powers.

• (1510)

Surely the members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition can see the minister's discretionary powers are limited by the department's mandate.

The bill clearly states the limitation is to matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction. Therefore there is no way clause 20 authorizes the minister to encroach on provincial jurisdiction.

Clause 20 allows HRDC to sign contracts with other organizations. The department could not function without that authority. The minister has signed thousands of contracts and agreements with numerous organizations, including the example I have already given, and organizations in the province of Quebec. Not only that, HRD has signed agreements with the Government of Quebec to help unemployed Quebecers return to the labour force.

In fiscal 1994-95 we signed more than 50,000 labour market contracts in the province of Quebec. Through those contracts we invested a total of \$695 million in program funding and income support. That was done under existing legislation. Bill C-11 simply carries forward these arrangements.

As I emphasized, clause 20 will not be used to bypass the authority of provincial governments or to intrude on their areas of jurisdiction.

The third clause apparently keeping members opposite awake at night is clause 21. I do not know why, because all clause 21 states is that the minister may delegate his authority, especially to the Minister of Labour. This section also enables the minister to delegate authority in order to support single window delivery, a key component in Human Resources Development Canada's services delivery network.

The ultimate aim is to provide Canadians with a simplified, faster and more accessible gateway to HRDC's programs and services. Single window delivery is a more flexible and a more efficient means of reaching that goal.

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As I speak, in Alma, the home town of the premier of Quebec, HRDC, SQDM, local municipalities and local clubs are working in partnership in a single window delivery system. This is one of a number of similar projects we have with the Government of Quebec. If the Government of Quebec is willing to work with us, and we are glad it is, I fail to understand why members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition are upset about these arrangements.

Another consideration is part II of the government's employment insurance legislation. It contains active measures to help unemployed Canadians get back to work quickly. This is part of our comprehensive response to addressing the underlying causes of unemployment.

To that end, the minister is currently discussing new arrangements with the provinces. However, these agreements will not infringe on provincial jurisdiction. On the contrary, the minister has made it abundantly clear that the Government of Canada will withdraw fully from labour market training in recognition of provincial responsibility in this area. We will do this over three years or less as we work out the details with each province.

The federal government would provide financial assistance to skills development but only with provincial agreement. In addition, the Government of Canada will work in concert with the governments of each province to put in place new customized labour market arrangements which will meet the different needs and circumstances of each province.

The Government of Canada will live up to its constitutional responsibility. We will retain jurisdiction over the national employment insurance system and the national dimension of our labour markets.

If that is not enough assurance for the party opposite, during the debate and the speech from the throne the Prime Minister stated: "The federal government is also prepared to withdraw from its functions in such areas as labour market training, forestry, mining and recreation. That in the 21st century will be more appropriately the responsibility of others, provinces, municipalities or the private sector".

• (1515)

In conclusion, I say to members opposite that there is nothing in Bill C-11 to suggest that the Government of Canada is centralizing national programs. This legislation deals strictly with administration. I urge the House to pass this bill so that we can move on to more urgent matters which I am sure all Canadians, including the people of Quebec, would prefer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, can I count on the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands' friendly support? It would motivate me in my presenta-

tion. I would have liked to speak to a bill more concerned about fighting poverty.

On my way to the House from my office, I was thinking that, instead of recycling Bill C-96, a bill that was roundly condemned by just about everyone in Quebec, the Minister of Human Resources Development would have enjoyed greater support from us if he had tabled a bill with two objectives.

The first objective would have been to take steps to fight poverty and the second one, to give back to Quebec some 25 manpower training programs duplicating provincial initiatives in this area, because \$250 million is being wasted or not used as efficiently as possible.

Why talk about poverty in 1996? Why should we, as members of Parliament, talk about poverty when the minister is about to put forward a centralizing bill? May I remind you that, by and large, government members took little notice of the annual report tabled a few days ago by the National Council of Welfare, which—I think it is important to remember this—pointed out that, globally, the number of poor people in society is not going down.

The government majority may act as though this was not an issue but, for all those with a social conscience—and God knows that includes the opposition—the fact is that even though people in our society are living longer, the poverty rate is rising.

In Canada, poor people—that is to say those who have to spend 56 per cent of their income on basic necessities, such as food, clothing and housing—according to Statistics Canada, are considered as such when they live in a large urban center and have to spend 56 per cent of their income on clothing, food and housing.

Looking at poverty rates in Canada, while 15 per cent of the population was living under the poverty line in the 1980s, 14 years later, 16.6 per cent of Canadians are still living in extremely difficult conditions and can be considered as poor.

Why did the minister and his government not look into this matter? Let me remind the House that the National Welfare Council prefaced its remarks by saying—I realize that some parliamentarians may not like to hear this, but let us nonetheless bear in mind the opening line of the council's press conference and related press release, which said: "Governments should add combatting poverty to the list of immediate economic priorities".

When was the last time we heard any member of this cabinet protest against the fact that such a situation is tolerated in a society like ours, where resources are plentiful, new production technologies available and a gross national product of about \$750 billion? Why is this situation being tolerated? How can this government allow that? In philosophical terms, it means something to be a liberal. But what did these Liberals do, those Liberals who, in the 1960s, were calling upon us to live in a just society, an increasingly just society? What does it mean for this Liberal government, in

1996, to live in a just society, an increasingly just society, when poverty rates are allowed to raise as high as 16 per cent?

• (1520)

The National Council of Welfare which, as we will see later, the government is about to muzzle with Bill C-11, tells us that 4.8 million people live at the poverty level. It must be understood that poverty, like other phenomena in our society, is not evenly spread.

Single parents are hardest hit. Three times out of four, it is the woman who is alone, often in difficult conditions, to raise her family. The reality is that, in 67 per cent of the cases, it is these women who are hit hard and who suffer from poverty.

Mr. Speaker, you may wonder what these comments have to do with Bill C-11. As you know, since I became a member of this House, I never allowed myself to be out of order. The connection is the following: had the minister taken a good look at the situation, he would have realized that we cannot afford to have two levels of government investing in programs which are similar in many respects.

Let me just give you the example of Quebec. Quebec employment minister Louise Harel, who happens to be the MNA for my riding of Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, told us during the last referendum campaign that the province of Quebec alone spends \$10 billion on its labour market policies. If you take the Quebec territory for the purpose of this comparison, relatively speaking this is more than what is invested by all OECD countries.

As you can see, the problem is not a lack of money. Considerable resources are allocated to labour market programs. The problem is the duplication of resources.

The minister is asking us to pass a bill which, for all intents and purposes, seeks to allow federal involvement in areas over which this government has no mandate. Try for a moment to imagine one of the 33 Fathers of Confederation coming back here and trying to understand what provision of the Constitution Act gives this government the authority to get involved in the area of labour or manpower.

Yet, if we were to accept this bill, the human resources branch would get involved, as it does unfortunately too often, in income security, post-secondary education, social welfare and student loans.

On the train earlier this week I read—maybe you heard about it because I know you have a sharp mind and that nothing escapes you in social matters—the Fortin report, which was commissioned by Quebec's minister of income security. The economist Pierre Fortin is not a research officer for the Bloc. Moreover, he has never declared himself in favour of sovereignty. You will be surprised,

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but even more disappointed, to see the analysis made in the Fortin report. I take the liberty of quoting from it, with the consent of my colleagues.

Part of the report reads as follows: “The federal government has already reacted to its own financial crisis in several ways. Of course, as we very well know, the federal government's debt is rather astronomical, and its deficit out of control”. It goes on to say: “Three federal measures directly affect income security in Quebec. First, access to unemployment insurance benefits has been reduced in 1990, 1993 and 1994”. In fact, Mr. Fortin should or could have gone even further back to 1988, when the unemployment insurance program was first attacked by the now infamous Conservatives.

• (1525)

The report reads: “For the year 1996-97, a cumulative reduction of 15 per cent of transfers to provinces under the CHST has been announced. Third, the elimination of the Canada Assistance Plan in 1996 has been announced”. Hon. members will remember that, under CAP, Ottawa used to share the cost of welfare programs fifty-fifty with the provinces. The most interesting part in this report is that it estimates that the federal retrenchment—in other words, the kind of policy being adopted here with regard to unemployment insurance—will create a very heavy burden for Quebec because 70,000 households will go onto income security if the bill is not amended. The direct and indirect costs of this will not translate into a deficit, but into unforeseen expenses of \$1 billion for the province. All of this, because of the offloading the federal government is doing. That is how harmful this system is.

In a system such as this, it is getting extremely difficult, even for the best Quebec government—and I think Quebec has a pretty good government right now—to plan effectively and to abide by its budgetary decisions, because the federal government can at any moment, without prior notice and without negotiating anything, wreak havoc with Quebec public finance. That is exactly what happened during the last three recessions.

As many have said before and as the hon. member for Mercier put it so eloquently, this bill which the government side wants us to pass is unanimously opposed. It is hard to think of another bill that brought together, in a unanimous show of displeasure, the employers, the unions, and various associations and co-ops.

What I am saying is so true that the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, a lawyer by profession—not his best quality, but then it was his choice—will perhaps want to raise a question of order at the end of my speech to have this document tabled. Should that be the case, I would be glad to table a resolution concerning the first version of this bill, numbered C-96, adopted by the Société

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québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre, whose work the hon. member from Kingston may be following.

Pursuant to this unanimous resolution, the tripartite board of the Société, made up of representatives from the unions, the employers and the Quebec government, is asking the federal government to take a very praiseworthy initiative, which meets the consensus reached in Quebec, and to give back to the province about 25 programs it currently manages.

This is no small achievement when a non-political organization, authorized and mandated by the government of Quebec to review the labour market policies, has its board, where the Bloc is not represented of course, pass a unanimous resolution to urge the federal government to give back the areas of jurisdiction related to manpower.

What are we seeing instead? How can the human resources minister be so insensitive, ill-advised and confused as to fail to recognize that by passing and supporting Bill C-11, we would thoroughly not only violate Quebec's interests but a consensus, which is a sacred thing in democracy.

If all this was only academic, there would be no reason for concern. These would only be rhetoric debates that would have nothing to do with the day-to-day life of our fellow citizens.

• (1530)

Here are some of the consequences resource duplication in the management of labour training programs can have. First, as it is now well known, there are 25 manpower training programs in Ottawa and 25 others in Quebec.

When his party was in power in Quebec, former minister Bourbeau, a Liberal, estimated that human resource duplication costs us \$275 million that could be put to a better use.

Even more dramatic is the fact that the system's inconsistency is such that, at this very moment, people really need help, really need training. You know full well that, as we near the year 2000, more and more the jobs that will be created will require 13, 14 or 15 years of schooling. This is a fact.

My father, who is almost 60, worked all his life for the same company. He succeeded in earning his life, supporting his family and making his children happy, but he spent all his working years with only one company.

I am only 33 years old, or rather I will be on May 13, and I already have three careers to my name. It is said that in the year 2000, people will accumulate five careers. That is why continuing education is so vital. It is not true that once you have a university degree or a technical or vocational diploma you will have the same job for all your working life without having to go through adjustment periods. On the contrary, nobody, in the young

generation, can think that he or she will have only one employer for all his or her life.

We will be committing a sin, a crime if we do not establish a manpower training system that is more rational, more coherent, and is based on the single-window concept.

This is so true that, at this very moment, there are approximately 25,000 people on the waiting lists in Quebec. There are 25,000 people in Quebec who, at different levels, need to improve their skills, who need to acquire experience, who need guidance services, but who are deprived of this resource, who are deprived of the assistance to which they are entitled because the system is inefficient.

You will ask: "Yes, but did the minister learn the lesson?" No, this minister is stubborn. This minister is looking ahead without concerning himself with what is going on in his environment. All Liberals are not like him, but I must say a majority of them seems to be of that type.

We can only wish, and anybody in their right mind would agree, that the minister will realize that the best thing that can happen to Quebec is that he changes his mind, that he does not authorize, as proposed in Bill C-11, various bodies which do not represent the Government of Quebec to obtain mandates directly from the Department of Human Resources Development, that he respects Quebec's jurisdiction and that he contributes.

He would become famous should he accept to put an end to duplication and work towards the establishment of a single window, as he has been asked to do by Quebec's Minister of Employment and Concerted Action, Louise Harel. This would ensure a more productive use of the resources that are available in the system, because it is absolutely wrong to suggest a lack of resources as an excuse. That is the challenge facing a minister who has been too stubborn until now.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, who once again has expressed social concerns, and not just for the people in his riding, which is very large.

• (1535)

I obviously support all he said on the attitude of the government, which, despite the message it sent during the referendum promising change and greater sensitivity towards Quebec, spoke gobbledegook.

Unfortunately, we are forced to recognize that it was gobbledegook, that the government's centralizing approach continues unabated. I know he has many more examples of this centralizing approach and of the government's desire to meddle even more in provincial jurisdictions. With Bill C-96, creating the Department of

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Human Resources Development, there is the example of training, education. Unfortunately, we can see that it is still not resolved.

I would like to ask the following question, because we have to comment and ask a question. I know I will not bother him at all, but I would like his opinion on the government's alleged decentralization, when we can see in the bill that the Minister of Human Resources Development is giving himself the power to go over the heads of the provincial governments and conclude specific agreements with organizations, even with businesses, in training or other areas. I would like his opinion on that.

Mr. Ménard: Mr. Speaker, you will understand that no matter how repetitive and expected this question is, it is still relevant. Allow me to stress the excellent work the member did on the human resources development committee; he was a very vocal representative of the Bloc Québécois on this issue.

I appreciate his question all the more as there are certain parallels to be drawn between Lévis and Hochelaga—Maison-neuve. We both have in our ridings people who have experienced de-skilling. For the most part, this is the history of my riding. It used to be a thriving city. It is hard to believe that between 1883 and 1918 Hochelaga—Maisonneuve had such a vibrant industrial sector that it was called the Pittsburg of Canada. I know that in his riding too, I am thinking about shipyard workers among others, there has been a de-skilling process.

What the member for Lévis is asking us to realize is that periodically through the history of federalism and through the history of the Liberal Party, we have witnessed a profoundly despicable, not to say shameful, and I believe totally unacceptable manoeuvre on the part of a government refusing to accept the position of a legitimately elected government, its counterpart in Quebec, and instead going through intermediaries.

This was done in the sixties on the language issue, such an outcry was raised that the government had to back down. What is unacceptable in this bill, I believe, is the push toward centralization and the lack of respect for the authorized agencies.

As far as manpower policies are concerned, the authorized agency is the Government of Quebec. So by what authority, what rationale would a government, even a Liberal government, think it has the right to use a CDEC, a municipality or any other agency or corporate entity to ignore Quebec's wishes?

All this must not keep us from seeing—I will try to be brief because I would be most honoured if the member for Kingston and the Islands were to be so daring as to ask me a question—that as long as there will be duplication of resources, some people will not receive training. Mr. Speaker, look at the member for Kingston and the Islands, I think he wants to talk to me.

• (1540)

[English]

Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve will not be disappointed, but I will try to stand in for my colleague from Kingston and the Islands as best I can.

I would preface my remarks by saying that as a woman I have often been plagued by the question: What do women want? I could translate that by saying: What does a Bloc Québécois want?

I listened to my colleague opposite asking for the minister to do away with duplication and overlap and to deal with the province of Quebec, I would answer him by saying that is exactly what this bill proposes.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, when the bill now before us was tabled in this House last June 7, and this March 7, a number of us were amazed that the Bloc was so strongly opposed to it. Many of us were amazed at their heroic efforts to delay passage of a bill which has as its sole purpose the regularization of a government administrative restructuring that took place two years before. Amazed yes, but not in the least surprised.

At that point we were on the verge of the referendum campaign and the opposition wasted no opportunity to try and convince Quebecers of the dark intentions of the federal government. Nor did they waste any opportunity to hinder the smooth operations of government, to hold up to scrutiny every little action or statement by members of the government, as a diversionary tactic. It is easy to understand what was behind their actions at that time, but then the referendum came along and Canada remained Canada.

When the bill came back, the opposition began to sing the same tune again, to throw up the same roadblocks, but for a different reason. This time it was a sort of warm up in preparation for their opposition to the employment insurance bill the minister was going to introduce shortly. Here again, their reasons for acting on the federal level to immobilize and oppose any proposed change are easily understood.

[English]

The reasons were clearly demonstrated recently, on March 12, when it proposed that the bill on employment insurance be withdrawn even though everyone agrees that the current employment insurance program is in need of reform.

However, one important change has taken place since the last time the bill to establish the Department of Human Resources Development was debated.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Meanwhile, the Quebec employment minister agreed, after meeting with the federal minister, to discuss our proposal regarding employment insurance. Discussions are still going on with Quebec, as well as with all other provinces. Quebec is interested in the formula proposed because it will allow updating the management of worker adjustment programs; because it is consistent with its own goals regarding decentralization in favour of regions; and because the federal government has clearly indicated its intention to withdraw from manpower training.

For a large part employment insurance entails decentralization and partnership with provinces. If clause 20 allows the minister to enter into agreements with a province, financial institutions or similar agencies it is simply because we have taken into consideration, by adapting them, section 7 of the Employment Department and Commission Act, section 6 of the Heritage Department Act and section 5 of the existing Department of Labour Act.

[English]

The Department of Human Resources Development Act does not give the minister any powers other than those already being exercised. It does not confer any powers that were not previously exercised, respectively, by the ministers responsible. What is involved, essentially, is internal management. In other words, hypothetically even if the bill were never passed the minister would still continue to do everything he does now. When the bill is passed the minister will not be doing anything more or anything less than what he has been doing until now.

• (1545)

[Translation]

We all know we must invest in our human resources if we want to stay ahead of the world's nations in terms of quality of life.

This bill reconfirms the basic mission given to that department by the Government of Canada by bringing under the same roof all initiatives and programs designed to help Canadians at all stages of life: learning, work and retirement. In fact, as the bill stipulates, the powers, duties and functions of the minister "are to be exercised with the objective of enhancing employment, encouraging equality and promoting social security".

The act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development is especially designed to allow the department to continue helping put Canadians back to work.

To do so, we need a legislation which provides a simple and integrated mechanism in order to clarify the role of the department and the responsibilities of the minister with respect to the Canadian people.

[English]

Members of this House have had ample opportunity to thoroughly examine and discuss the bill which will put an end to this transitional phase, a transitional phase not only for this department but for the entire government reorganization.

[Translation]

I therefore believe it is time to put an end to it now and to consider other issues far more crucial for Canadians and the future of this country.

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech of my colleague opposite. I want to comment on it and perhaps ask her a question in closing.

As you know, I am the member for Shefford. The main town in my riding is Granby. Granby is an industrial town of approximately 45,000 inhabitants. There are about 90,000 people in the region.

Cuts were announced under both human resources development ministers. This reminds of the dismantling of railways in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, you are a federalist—I have no doubt about that, Mr. Speaker—and I believe that all across Canada, employment centres are considered as a symbol of Canada. They are actually closing them down, doing away with them, so much so that Granby now receives only \$36,000 from the federal government in lieu of taxes. Might as well say there is no federal presence in our region.

When our great country was created, the federal government's goal was to distribute wealth fairly across the territory. But now, my region is cut off by this government. Some 50 or 55 people were working in the employment centre, and now the government is considering going down to 12 or maybe 18 employees—no decision has been made yet.

This is sad for my region. It is a heavy blow since the employment centre, as it was organized, was making a significant contribution to the region's development. It is a whole network they are breaking up. This network is important for the regions. It is important for Quebec, for its development. Usually, all kinds of people are represented on boards of trade, people from every political affiliation, mostly federalists.

• (1550)

The Granby Board of Trade circulated a petition that was signed by over 6,000 people to condemn the government's attitude and to ask it to give more consideration to regions. As I said earlier, employment centres are a symbol of the Government of Canada, but this symbol is about to disappear because of the policies of the department and the minister.

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My question is this: When the government makes decisions like the one to reform the system, why does it ignore the other governments? I would like to hear the member's comments on that matter.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sheridan: Mr. Speaker, my initial response to the member's question would be the same as the introduction to my speech: What does the Bloc Québécois want? On the one hand it is saying to keep our nose out of its affairs; on the other hand it is saying to do more for it specifically and do not worry about the interests of other Canadians.

The business of governing this country as a country is to take into account the interests of all Canadians. The minister is taking a positive step forward in doing that. He is doing it in Quebec in the same way he is doing it in any other region of the country. As part of the family, we all share and share alike.

Sooner or later the member opposite will have to figure out what he wants.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Leroux (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, what do we want? That is a good question. As I said before, we want the government to behave in an equitable manner. The hon. member says this is done everywhere in the country. That does not mean it is a good thing.

That is not the problem. We know there are structures, we know there is some co-operation between Canadian employment centres and those responsible for employment in Quebec, where there is a tradition of co-operation at the local level. However, what is happening at the present time is that they are dismantling the network, and this will do considerable damage to job creation. It is as if the federal government were withdrawing while continuing to exercise control over programs. It wants control but it does not want to invest in the area, and that is unacceptable.

The federal government has a certain responsibility in that regard and, frankly, you will agree with me that it should give all its support to the level of government best able to decide and closest to the people of the regions.

What I am asking, and I would like the opinion of the hon. member on this, is for the federal government to stop, once and for all, interfering needlessly in our affairs and give back to the regions what they are entitled to.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sheridan: Mr. Speaker, again I think the member is encumbered with a lot of rhetoric and misapprehension of the facts as they exist.

As I said in my speech, it was that member and all of his friends across the way who wanted the Government of Canada to keep its

nose out of their affairs during the time leading up to the referendum in Quebec.

In response to the concerns of people in Quebec and all across the country the Prime Minister made a commitment at the end of last year. He stated that the Government of Canada would withdraw from labour market training, apprenticeship programs, co-operative education programs and so on. This seems to be exactly what the member opposite was saying, that we should let the government that is in the best position to understand local needs design the programs. This has been delivered on.

I know the member is full of fuss and bother this afternoon but it has nothing to do with any failure of this government to deliver on those promises.

• (1555)

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, for the last two and one-half years the Department of Human Resources Development has been operating without a mandate and some would say without any direction or agenda.

Back in January 1994 amid the fanfare of the speech from the throne, Canadians were promised social program reform. One would have thought the government would have quickly given this department a mandate to operate and then tackled the task of bringing Canada's outdated social programs into the 21st century.

The fact that it has taken the government two years and two ministers to get this far is further evidence that real reform will not happen before the next election. No doubt social program reform will turn up as an election promise in the 1997 version of the Liberal red book of broken promises.

One of the most intriguing parts of the bill was the appointment of the Minister of Labour and the deputy minister. When the old department of labour was amalgamated with the new superministry of human resources development, the whole idea behind it was incorporation. At last, we thought, here was a department whose function would be transferred to the provinces and to the private sector. What a step forward for labour relations in Canada. Then along came the Quebec referendum and suddenly we needed a labour minister. At the last minute, to accommodate the member for Saint-Henri—Westmount, this strange reporting structure was included in what was then Bill C-96.

According to Bill C-11 the Minister of Labour may be appointed but if there is no labour minister, the duties fall to the human resources development minister. The question has to be asked: Do we need a full time labour minister, a secretary of state for labour, or just a parliamentary secretary? Maybe the minister was included so there would be no question about the need for a deputy minister.

If labour requires a full minister, should such a position not be designated by statute rather than just simply an optional position? If labour requires a minister other than a junior minister, will it ultimately break away from human resources development and

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become a department unto itself? This bill raises a lot more questions than it answers. These are things that have not been debated fully and should have been considered by the author of the bill.

By bringing the labour department under the human resources umbrella and its superminister, perhaps the government hoped to get the unions onside and perhaps take advantage of the decline in popularity of the faltering New Democrats.

If the government was really concerned about labour relations, it would not have allowed things to deteriorate to the point where in two years time it would have to legislate grain handlers and railway workers back to work three times. Three times in two years the system did not work properly. If the government was truly concerned about workers in Canada and management, it would have amended the Canada Labour Code or at least looked at amending the Canada Labour Code to include final offer arbitration as a mechanism for solving labour disputes.

The government would be introducing more legislation like Bill C-3. Bill C-3 brings all workers in nuclear facilities under provincial jurisdiction and certainly is a step in the right direction. The labour component of the department of HRD would cease to exist and would not require the services of a minister or of a deputy minister.

If the government had allowed passage of Motion No. 2 as presented by my colleague for Mission—Coquitlam, it would not be presented with the problem of court rulings over who has jurisdiction in overlapping industrial sectors as was the case which necessitated the drafting of Bill C-3.

• (1600)

It is time to move forward with the devolution of federal control in labour matters to the provinces. Certainly there is much support for that on this side of the House. I would encourage members opposite to come to like thinking.

Part I of the Canada Labour Code is currently under review and would be an appropriate starting point for the minister who is anxious to do away with duplication of services.

I would like to remind members that Canada has a \$580 billion debt. The minister opposite and certainly the finance minister are very cognizant of that. They are looking for ways in which to whittle down that debt.

The Minister of Labour could contribute to this reduction if he initiates measures to do away with overburdensome bureaucracy and duplication by giving the provinces control over labour standards, labour relations and occupational health and safety. I suggest that he would find that workers and management alike

would support his action because both sides want and deserve a level playing field.

Labour and management have the common goal of maintaining a productive workplace. As legislators, we should do all we can to advance that goal. We can facilitate this by relinquishing control over the bureaucratic regulations that stand in the way of sound labour relations.

Reflecting back to Bill C-3, I again say that it is a step in the right direction. Bill C-11 would be worthy of support had it followed along the same path.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to put a question to my colleague after making a few remarks.

The Quebec government, Quebec as a whole and labour confederations would most certainly agree with the total takeover of all the labour sector. However, we cannot talk about this issue without referring once again to the Constitution, since the Privy Council in London established, in a 1925 decision, after a seven year delay, I believe, that labour relation jurisdiction belonged to the provinces, except that all businesses that, one way or another, came under more than one province would come under federal jurisdiction. That is what brought about this duplication that is causing so many problems for workers.

I would like to point out to the member that in Quebec, for instance, the act respecting occupational health and safety provides that women who find out they are pregnant and believe that their work may affect them or their child have the right to ask for a change of position. If the employer cannot transfer them to another position, they have the right to stay home with 90 per cent of their salary. The same thing applies when the mother breast-feeds her child.

You can understand that women work for businesses that come under federal jurisdiction are not allowed the same right, they say it is not fair and the whole union movement has been doing the same for years now. This goes to prove what our colleague just said, except that we cannot deal with this matter without going through the Constitution.

In my speech this morning, I have demonstrated how Bill C-11 calls for a constitutional debate.

• (1605)

The only way provinces disagreeing with decisions taken by the central government, by the Department of Human Resources Development under this bill, can have their way would be to sidestep this decision and manage the money themselves.

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This calls for a constitutional type amendment, or the government should agree to recognize the full jurisdiction of the provinces, which it does not, even in the throne speech.

So, my question to my colleague is whether he and his party should not have chosen to criticize more than the labour relation considerations of the bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

My Reform colleague spoke to the bill this morning. Although she touched on some labour issues, she had broader criticisms of the bill.

I would like to address an issue that my Bloc colleague has raised. It is the overlap in provincial and federal jurisdiction. The position of our party is that jurisdiction should be given to the level of government which is closest to the people. Less government is the best government. To decrease the bureaucracy would be of benefit to all Canadians. The bureaucracy would be closer to the people it serves.

As is sometimes the case now with the federal government, there would not be a nameless, faceless entity. Canada is a huge place and the capital cannot be everywhere. For the vast majority of Canadians the capital is a long way from home.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague argues that a department of labour is not necessary, that a minister of labour is not necessary. I totally disagree. As you know, there are labour disputes in several areas still under federal jurisdiction, and a minister is needed to try to settle these disputes.

The labour code must be revamped. Anti-scab legislation is needed, for instance. The union movement needs a full-time minister of labour, and I ask the hon. member why he is against appointing a minister of labour, a position that has always existed in Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker, my Bloc colleague suggests that the Minister of Labour is needed because he adjudicates or solves problems that arise between labour and management. I submit to him that I have never seen a labour minister, provincial or federal, who has solved a labour problem.

I would like to cite the three instances in the two and a half years that I have been here when the House voted to force workers back to work, whether they were locked out or on strike, in order for grain transportation to continue. That is not ministerial intervention. That is intervention by the entire House of Commons. The minister does not solve those problems. If he really wanted to do

something to solve those problems he would look at implementing final offer arbitration selection so that both groups, management and labour, would have the tools to resolve their problems without involving either the minister or the House of Commons.

• (1610)

All due respect to my friend, just because we have had a minister of labour for years and years is no justification for us to continue with that position.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate at third reading of Bill C-11, the old Bill C-96, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development and to amend and repeal certain related acts. I had the opportunity last November to participate in the debate at second reading of Bill C-96.

Only a few minor changes, which increase the number of departments and organizations allowed to consult recipients' files, were made to this bill in committee. This breach of confidentiality is another reason why I will vote against this bill.

I, however, support the motion requiring this department and the department of labour to table an annual activity report. This requirement is not new. The public as well as parliamentarians need to be informed of the actions and decisions taken by the department, the unemployment insurance commission and the national council of welfare.

In essence, this bill provides for the administrative restructuring of the department, merging sections and services from the former departments of employment and immigration, health and welfare, labour and the old secretary of state. At the same time, the bill gives the Prime Minister the authority to appoint a Minister of Labour and a Deputy Minister of Labour. I am all in favour of having a labour minister. We absolutely need one, especially if we want a thoroughly revised Canadian Labour Code, and more specifically anti-strikebreaking legislation, to be submitted to us as soon as possible.

This bill promotes a greater federal presence and gives the minister new powers, enabling him, among others things, to go over the heads of the provinces, and Quebec in particular, and negotiate directly with local authorities and organizations. Under clause 20, the minister may enter into agreements with agencies and bodies other than the provinces.

According to clause 6, the powers, duties and functions of the minister extend to all matters relating to the development of human resources in Canada. He is responsible in particular for enhancing employment, encouraging equality and promoting social security. That is a far cry from what has been happening in Canada for the past two and a half years.

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However noble these goals may be, the situation is deteriorating rapidly in these areas. Statistics Canada data show that, while 9.3 per cent of the population, or 1,407,000 people, were unemployed in Canada in March 1996, 10.9 per cent of the population, or 400,000 people, were unemployed in Quebec.

Just last week, Kenworth announced it was shutting down its truck manufacturing plant in Sainte-Thérèse, but this government did not lift a finger to save the 900 jobs at stake. I urge the federal government once again to make every effort to ensure this plant remains in operation to provide employment to its workers.

• (1615)

The new Department of Human Resources Development must increase efficiency and productivity. People often tell me that the processing of claims takes too long. We must shorten the amount of time needed to process unemployment insurance claims, appeals of unemployment insurance decisions, old age pension claims, etc.

Once again, I am strongly opposed to the closure of the Canada Employment Centre located on Papineau Street, in Montreal, which serves constituents in my riding of Bourassa, hard hit by unemployment. By 1997, this office will be closed. People in Montreal North need help, services and resources, but they do not need government cuts when they are going through hard times. My riding is already poverty-stricken.

Given the situation, the federal government should also provide more resources for the Program for Older Worker Adjustment, or POWA.

Other employment centres have closed or will be closed on Montreal Island. I vigorously oppose such measures because they smack of partisan politics.

I took advantage of the Easter recess to invite representatives of community agencies in my riding to participate in a discussion on the changes made in the unemployment insurance system. Once again, I wish to thank all the agencies represented at this meeting, including the local community service centre of Montreal North, and the CDEC in my riding which, fortunately, is starting to receive the necessary resources to carry out its much needed mission. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following agencies: Maison des jeunes l'Ouverture, Impulsion travail, Rond-point Jeunesse au travail, Centre multiculturel Claire, Maison Saint-Laurent, Fondation de la Visite, Centre d'activités pour le maintien de l'équilibre émotionnel de Montréal-Nord, Association des travailleurs haïtiens au Canada, Entre-Parents, Centre Louis-Fréchette, etc.

Almost all these organizations have clients who receive unemployment insurance benefits, and they often rely on the various programs offered by the Papineau employment centre.

Participants were shocked to see that, once again, the cuts will affect the unemployed. These new measures will intensify the exclusion process and make it worse.

Last March, I condemned the federal government's refusal to include social clauses in the bilateral trade agreement between Canada and Chile. It is officials from the human resources department who negotiate labour issues on Canada's behalf. Thanks to our representations and to the very effective action of the Canadian and Chilean union movements, the government relented and agreed to that very legitimate request. We must congratulate the Chilean government for always recognizing the social dimension of NAFTA and of this trade agreement.

However, the Canadian government is not willing to go further than what is provided in the parallel agreement that is already part of NAFTA but which is inadequate. The agreement should include more effective ways to protect the rights of workers, as well as better labour standards.

During my trip to Chile last January, I was shocked to learn from Chilean workers and union members that some Canadian businesses, including mining companies, do not always comply with basic health and safety standards. Among other things, they mentioned the use of toxic substances which are prohibited in Canada.

I am pleased that the value of Canadian and Quebec investments in Chile has reached \$7 billion.

• (1620)

I take this opportunity to send a message of social responsibility to Canadian companies investing in Latin America and other continents.

To conclude, I would like to talk briefly about pensions, another matter the human resources development department is responsible for. I was shocked to learn that some people are considering the privatization of the Canada pension plan. True, other countries have tried that, and it has been a disaster.

I am against any reduction in benefits, and we must have full access to the plan. Universality has to be maintained. However, I would agree to raising the maximum insurable income above \$35,000 to collect more contributions. I am strongly opposed to the idea of raising the age of retirement to 67. We need to make room for the young. The existing Canada pension plan should be improved and not reduced.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Madam Speaker, once again the hon. member for Bourassa has shown that he understands the problems of his constituents, the people he represents. He has shown also that he has a good understanding of the nature and the scope of the Department of Human Resources Development.

It must be remembered that, except for the servicing of the debt, this is the one that accounts for the largest share of the money allocated in the federal budget, more than 40 per cent. It is

responsible for a huge number of programs and services. The hon. member for Bourassa recalled, and rightly so, the closing down of some employment centres, including the one in the district of Papineau, as he mentioned. That happened also elsewhere.

The debate today deals with the legislation establishing the Department of Human Resources Development; we see on the cover that it is Bill C-11, the former Bill C-96, which brings back the previous legislation unchanged. We see that this legislation could be called the law of silence.

I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks about it. This bill will strengthen the powers of the Minister of Human Resources Development. It will give him authority to encroach even further on and bypass provincial jurisdictions, especially in the area of manpower training. It will allow the minister to bypass the provincial government and deal directly with organizations and businesses in matters of training, among others. Therefore, this is something important that raises the constitutional issue. The Bloc Québécois is not pleased to deal with this issue, but the government is grabbing even more constitutional powers to interfere in areas under provincial jurisdiction.

At the moment, I am asking questions to my colleague, but the answers should come from members opposite. We are surprised to see that members opposite, especially those from Quebec, are not making speeches and not taking part in the debate on the bill establishing the largest federal department, and that members of the third party, who usually deal so meticulously with expenditures, are not interested either in that topic. Where are we? I would like the hon. member for Bourassa to comment on that law of silence that is in force, on yet another operation designed to put Quebec in its place.

Mr. Nunez: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Lévis, who is doing a remarkable job both in the House and on the human resources development committee.

• (1625)

Of course, I agree with him and with my party that Bill C-11 reinforces the powers of the federal government as opposed to those of the provinces. As I said in my speech, the minister will be able to go over the provinces' heads and negotiate directly with organizations, and that is unacceptable.

There are a lot of community organizations in my riding. These organizations would rather deal with the Government of Quebec, which has a better understanding of the situation and the problems in Montreal and Montreal North in particular, than with Ottawa, which is so far away. This is why I wholeheartedly agree with what the member said. Again, I want to stress that, with this bill, the

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federal government is infringing upon provincial areas of jurisdiction, especially the labour training area.

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this debate on Bill C-11. As my colleague from Lévis mentioned a few minutes ago, it is amazing to see how government members and even members of the third party in this House, the Reform Party, are silent on this subject.

This has to be noted since, as mentioned by the member for Lévis, this is the most important department in terms of its budget and even, I would say, in terms of its repercussions on the lives of Canadians. Forty per cent of the federal budget is allocated to that department.

So we have to wonder why government members are silent on this subject. How is it that only the official opposition, the Bloc Québécois, wants to take part in this debate to inform the people, to tell them how dangerous this bill is and what could happen if we give so much power to the Minister of Labour. In the few minutes I have, I will do my best to explain what powers the minister is getting in this bill.

To do so I will refer to the legislation itself. Clauses 6 and 7 of Bill C-11 talk about the powers, duties and functions of the minister.

Clause 6 says:

6. The powers, duties and functions of the Minister extend to and include all matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction relating to the development of the human resources of Canada not by law assigned to any other Minister, department, board or agency of the Government of Canada, and are to be exercised with the objective of enhancing employment, encouraging equality and promoting social security.

Everybody should agree with that since clause 6 says that, in creating this department, the federal government wants to enhance employment, encourage equality and promote social security. This is really apple pie; of course everybody wants to attain such goals.

Moreover, it says in this clause that the minister recognizes that he will have to exercise these powers, duties and functions in his own areas of jurisdiction. It is said specifically that his department cannot infringe upon the powers of other federal departments or agencies. Consequently, we could say: "At last, the federal government intends to mind its own business, to play in its own backyard, and, therefore, to respect the powers of the provinces".

• (1630)

In order to understand if such is the government's intent, we must also read clause 7 as well as clause 20, which go together.

Clause 7 reads as follows:

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7. In exercising the powers or performing the duties or functions assigned to the Minister under this or any other Act of Parliament, the Minister may

That is the Minister of Human Resources Development.

(a) subject to the Statistics Act, collect, analyse, interpret—

And so on. These are all formalities. Paragraph (b) reads as follows:

(b) cooperate with provincial authorities with a view to the coordination of efforts made or proposed for preserving and improving human resources development.

It is there in black and white, if words mean anything, even in the House: "The Minister may cooperate"; it is not written that the minister must cooperate, but that he "may" cooperate with provincial authorities. Therefore, the minister has all the leeway he needs to accept or refuse to cooperate with a provincial government.

In clause 6, it is said that the minister cannot exercise powers assigned to other federal departments, boards or agencies, but in paragraph 7(b), it is said he "may" cooperate with the provinces. We know that, since its inception, the federal government has used all acceptable and unacceptable means available to it to invade provincial fields of jurisdiction.

We have seen it time and time again in the past, such as in the case of old age security, family allowances and unemployment insurance, which were all provincial fields of jurisdiction. And, over the years, for all manner of reasons, including the depression in the 1920s and then later on the war, the federal government has laid its hands on powers, supposedly temporarily, but the situation then became permanent. Over time, some have been entrenched in the Constitution, as is the case with unemployment insurance.

So there is nothing reassuring about clause 6, when read in conjunction with clause 7.

If I may, let us jump ahead a bit to examine clause 20. What does clause 20 of Bill C-11 say? Since we are still looking at the same bill, it is appropriate to link them up. Clause 20 states:

20. For the purpose of facilitating the formulation, coordination and implementation of any program or policy relating to the powers, duties and functions referred to in section 6, the Minister may

—repeating the wording of clause 7—

enter into agreements with a province or group of provinces, agencies of provinces, financial institutions and such other persons or bodies as the Minister considers appropriate.

So, as the saying goes, the thing has come full circle; we have just grasped that the minister can decide to co-operate with a province, as it says in paragraph 7(b). So, if by chance the minister

does not feel like co-operating with a province, he can pass on it. But what will he do then, according to clause 20? He will go over the heads of the provinces, and negotiate directly or conclude agreements with bodies in each of the provinces.

• (1635)

Clause 20 does not say so because, naturally, the federal government wants to deceive, to hide the truth. Clause 20 does not say that the federal government or one of its agencies will be able to deal directly with a municipality, but it must be understood that provincial public agencies are just like municipalities. Municipalities are agencies, creatures of provincial governments. Therefore, as I understand it, under this clause the federal government is giving itself the necessary leeway to bypass provincial governments and deal directly with municipalities and agencies at the provincial level.

This is the government's, the minister's intention and we know that this minister more than anyone else will not hesitate to push provinces aside, especially Quebec, and to try to enter into agreements which will go against the wishes, goals and policies of the Government of Quebec.

During the few minutes I have left, I want to talk about the common will and consensus regarding professional training policies. This is not the only area where Quebec will stand alone, where it will be a distinct homeland—the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs may wish to use another expression since "distinct society" and "principal homeland" seem to have disappeared; we could perhaps use "distinct homeland" for a few weeks. In Quebec there has been for many years, I repeat, for many years a consensus between all stakeholders, all interested parties. This includes the Government of Quebec, labour confederations and employers. For the first time in the history of Quebec, I would say, a consensus was reached to ask the federal government to withdraw from manpower training, to take its paws off this provincial jurisdiction and to put a stop to the duplication and endless meddling in this sensitive area, not only in economic terms, but in the day-to-day existence of our fellow citizens. We are talking about real people, who work or who need retraining or additional training because of the closure of their place of work.

As my colleagues have pointed out here and elsewhere, how many times do we have to reiterate the need for a clean-up in manpower training? In Quebec, management, unions and government have all said the same thing. When I speak of government, I do not mean the separatist government of Mr. Bouchard currently in power, but the federalist government before it, the governments of Mr. Johnson and Mr. Bourassa, and no one can accuse Mr. Bourassa of even the slightest hint of a separatist tendency.

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• (1640)

If there was ever someone ready to compromise, I would say to make every concession, in order to keep Quebec within the Canadian Federation, it was the former premier of Quebec, Mr. Bourassa. Yet, even he and his government joined in the consensus, in Quebec, that manpower training should be under exclusive provincial jurisdiction, as already provided for in the Constitution, and that the federal government should be asked to withdraw from this area.

However, when reading clauses 6, 7(b) and 20 of the bill before us, we see that the federal government does not intend to abide by this consensus, but intends on the contrary to continue to do what it has been doing for years, that is to interfere in any way, at any time and with anyone it wants to.

Question period after question period, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the former Minister of Human Resources Development and the present minister of this portfolio, have all stood in this House one after the other to state their intention, their firm resolve to decentralize, to withdraw from this area of provincial jurisdiction in order to abide by the Constitution.

That is what they are saying day after day, question period after question period, election campaign after election campaign but, in reality, when the time comes to make a decision, the first thing they do is to write, in black and white, that they intend to do just the opposite.

After that, one hardly wonders at the cynicism—not to call it something worse—of the population with respect to politics and politicians. This is called double talk. One cannot say one thing, then say the opposite, and claim there is no inconsistency.

The federal government says over and over that it is ready to withdraw from manpower training. Why did not they write in their bill that they are leaving this responsibility to the provinces and that they recognize once and for all the consensus arrived at in Quebec? It would have been simple and easy. I am convinced that, for once, the House would have been unanimous on a bill, since that is what all stakeholders in Quebec are demanding.

I think the minister can still act before the bill is passed. Consequently, it is necessary for the Minister of Human Resources Development and his Prime Minister to have a serious discussion as soon as possible and for them agree that this bill is flawed—that is the least we can say. In fact, the bill does not follow through on the federal government's intentions to withdraw from manpower training. The Minister could see to it that the necessary changes are made.

Nothing would do more to prove the government's good will than if it announced during this debate that it is once and for all

withdrawing from manpower training. If it did so, it would gain the full support of stakeholders in Quebec and of the official opposition. I think there would be no better way to conclude this debate.

• (1645)

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent statement, which illustrates once again the importance of the manpower issue.

Before I ask a question, I want to say that this bill has a greater scope than what we might think since human resources development can mean much more than training and labour adjustment. It can pertain directly to training but it can also concern family policies. In fact, it can relate to anything that affects human development.

He is right in stressing how outrageous it is, for instance, that the manpower training issue has not yet been resolved in view of the fact that the consensus in Quebec is so strong and has been so for so long. This morning, I quoted a 1991 letter in which Mr. Bourbeau, then labour minister, was making the same requests to Mr. Valcourt, the federal minister, and stating Quebec's opposition to any federal action that would bypass the province in that area.

The minister referred to some correspondence between himself and Mr. Valcourt, but reminded him also that he had discussed the issue with Mrs. McDougall and that she had agreed not to bypass the province. He made the following interesting comment on the relation between that issue and the constitutional debate: "Mrs. McDougall told me that the federal government sees a connection between whatever Quebec requests and the constitutional review process. I disapproved of that idea, because even if there was perfect constitutional harmony in the country—which is not the case as we know, especially since October 30—Quebec would still make the same requests, since it is urgent for the economic development of Quebec to make all manpower programs efficient and in line with Quebec's own priorities". This is Mr. Bourbeau, a Liberal minister, a federalist talking.

Needless to say, five years later, when we see that the minister is claiming as his own Bill C-96, which is now C-11, and that he believes he can bypass the province in all areas of manpower development, make agreements with anybody without granting the province the power to opt out of an agreement and to manage the related funds, we can only react with outrage. Why? Because this is not a quarrel between two levels of government. It is of the highest urgency that the little money we have be put to work on behalf of the people; the Quebec government is responsible for the economic and social development of Quebec. The Quebec government is the one closest to citizens. It has the duty and responsibility to provide its citizens with the tools they need.

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It is not for nothing that we have the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre cooperating with labour, management and everybody. It is because things are terribly urgent.

I would like to ask my colleague how the need to put all the resources available at the service of citizens can be felt in his riding, in a concrete way?

Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mercier who, as everyone knows, is an expert in this field and who always brings us down to earth.

• (1650)

I do not want to talk about agriculture, even though this would make the hon. member for Beauséjour happy. Some of the bills passed by this House may be a little “far out”, if I may use this term, or have little impact on people’s everyday lives. However, on reading Bill C-11, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development and to amend and repeal certain related acts, for the first time, members may wonder what impact this bill could have on their fellow citizens’ daily lives.

The hon. member for Mercier has just reminded us that the perverse effects of this bill, and to an even larger extent those of the decisions made by the Minister of Human Resources Development, can be seen every day. In fact, in my riding, as in all ridings in Quebec, how many times have we heard unemployed people and owners of small, medium size and large businesses complain about the time—in business time is money—needed to deal with bureaucrats, to meet the requirements of officials from all departments? They also have to deal with other bureaucrats asking the same questions in the same area. There is one official from the Quebec government and one from the federal government.

That is why, as my hon. colleague indicated, the Department of Human Resources Development interferes in a multitude of aspects relating to manpower development, and the same could be said about other areas over which the department has authority. Over time, this has created such confusion that we do not know if we are coming or going. It is a well-known fact that has been stated and demonstrated time and time again. That is the explanation, and it has nothing to do with their generosity of spirit or with the various organizations losing sight of their mandate or clientele. I am thinking of the Conseil du patronat negotiating with the CSN or the FTQ. They do not do so for the fun of it, to take advantage of the CSN, but rather because they believe it is in everyone’s best interest to reach a consensus.

The same goes for the unions. I do not think Gérald Larose is crazy about sitting at the same table as Ghislain Dufour, from the Conseil du patronat. But dealing with manpower training and

making sure Quebecers receive appropriate training to become not only competitive on the work market but also more efficient in their jobs, which in turn ensures that we produce higher quality products, is good for everybody. That is what the consensus in Quebec is all about.

It is quite simple. We must achieve tangible results. Labour, management, governments, we all have to work together to ensure that our workers are well trained and our plants operating to the satisfaction of the consumers, so that everybody is happy. We must revisit various programs to avoid duplication, implement programs in line with reality, so that where cooks are needed, we train cooks, not engineers.

As my colleague from Mercier mentioned, this affects people in their daily lives. Finally, it is important that the Liberal members who are listening to the debate talk to their colleague and try to convince him, if possible. I wish them good luck, because we are having a hard time trying to convince the Minister of Human Resources Development that he should improve his bill and announce he will not interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to take exception to the member’s speech. In his opening remarks he said that he was quite surprised and expressed disappointment that the government and the third party were very silent on this bill. I take exception to that.

We have not been silent on this bill. I would like him to acknowledge the fact that we have not been silent on this bill. Our two critics stood in this House today and expressed this party’s point of view. They expressed it quite clearly and very eloquently. I would like the hon. member to acknowledge that fact.

Just because his party wishes to prolong the debate and wishes to have more people speak on this issue, he should not then put down members of the third party who have spoken to this bill. Would he please acknowledge that?

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, my answer will be very brief.

In making these comments, it was indeed my intention to help Reform Party members realize the importance of this debate and take part in it. However, their interest is limited to say the least, since we have heard very few of them.

As for us, our intention is not to unduly prolong this debate, but to make people aware of the importance of this bill and particularly of its dreadful consequences.

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Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ): Madam Speaker, indeed I come from the riding of Longueuil, the nicest one in Quebec. Located along the St. Lawrence River, it reflects the history of French Canadians, the history of Quebec. There are some very old houses. I myself own a house built in 1854. It was bought by the Oblate Fathers when they first came to Canada. They settled on Saint-Charles street, in Longueuil. As you know, the Oblate Fathers were missionaries and discoverers. They promoted Quebec's development and we are very proud of that.

As regards Bill C-11, the Liberal government is once again helping itself. It creates a new department, it changes the name of the department so as to give itself more power, much more power as was explained by the Bloc Quebecois members who spoke before me. It seeks to provide the minister with the authority to get involved with the private sector, with the provinces, or some of them, for the purpose of creating a system that will be detrimental to the Quebec employment department.

In Quebec, a manpower development agency was set up a few years ago. This structure reflects the unanimous will of all Quebecers, whether they are from business or labour, and whether they belong to either one the two main parties, namely the Parti Quebecois and the Quebec Liberal Party. There is a definite consensus. All Quebecers agree that the province must have its own way of dealing with the unemployed or with welfare recipients, who had the misfortune of losing their job. There are some who had the misfortune of losing their employment because of the federal government's way of managing.

- (1700)

We know that the federal government, through its policies of concentrating all the powers here in Ottawa, wants to show Quebecers that it is the big leader of this country. It wants to show that, without the federal government, it would be impossible to survive in Quebec. All the measures it has taken have had the effect of bringing about inflation in some cases; after having caused inflation, it increased interest rates, which generated recessions between 1970 and 1980.

Between 1984 and 1986, we experienced the same problem when inflation and recession were brought about. So, the real cause of the social problems we have in Quebec is particularly related to the inappropriate actions taken by the federal government. Today, the minister wants to give himself powers to manage the unemployment insurance program better. But the government is the cause of unemployment.

I want to point out that we cannot have much confidence in this Liberal government. Only three weeks ago, I asked questions of the secretary of state for finance, who was saying that he wanted to set

up an unemployment insurance fund, adding that he wanted to use the moneys collected from both employees and employers, some \$5 billion a year, to collect even more and then give it back under the new way of managing the unemployment insurance program.

He was saying that this fund could be used to reduce Canada's debt, and that he also wanted to set up a fund to accumulate money for lean years to come. Let me remind him that these are lean years.

If the government wants to build up a reserve during the lean years, how much more money will it collect when prosperity returns? Apparently, it will collect \$5 billion during a lean year like this one. How much will it collect when times are good? Will it be \$10 billion, or \$15 billion? Where will all that money go? In the consolidated revenue fund, to reduce the Canadian debt.

The poor are being squeezed, and the small businesses too. We know that the maximum insured income has been reduced. The higher the salary, the lower the relative contribution will be. Quebec has many small businesses, and our salaries are lower. That means that small businesses will pay more. In a way, workers and employers will have to pay a new tax to reduce the federal deficit.

It is a strange way to put government finance back in order. They squeeze money out of workers and small businesses in Quebec to reduce the federal deficit. As you can see, we do not trust this way of doing things. This bill gives more powers to the minister, so you will understand why we are apprehensive, and why we worry so much about the future.

My colleagues have already mentioned that Quebec wants to have complete jurisdiction over manpower training. That has been said so many times in the past. There reasons why Quebec wants this. Quebec is a distinct society, whether you like it or not. It is a fact of life.

- (1705)

It is a reality. English Canada has to understand once and for all that Quebec is a distinct society.

We are a distinct society, not necessarily because of our French language. The fact that we speak French is patently obvious, of course. Quebecers speak French and quite a high percentage of French speaking Quebecers do not speak English. For instance, the minister could ask a Quebec worker who just lost his job to take a job in Toronto or in Vancouver. That is what is called manpower mobility.

Any worker who loses his or her job could be asked to move to Vancouver for example or Toronto to get a job. However, a French speaking Quebecer who does not speak English could refuse to take a job in Toronto or in Vancouver, but then he would stand to lose his UI benefits, because a French speaking Quebecer can be forced to

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move to an area where he, in principle, cannot work, and where he is not at all interested to go. It is too big a change to ask of him.

Because Quebec is a distinct society, we cannot make the same rules for Quebecers as for the rest of Canadians. This is one of the reasons we believe Quebec should be responsible for unemployment insurance and for manpower training. Everybody agrees with that in Quebec.

Quebec is not a distinct society just because of its language. Quebec is not a distinct society just because of its folklore. Our folk dances are not the only difference. We dance the typical square dances of the Scotch and the Irish. If ours is a distinct society, it is not only because of folklore. We have a distinct culture.

In particular, we are distinct because of our financial institutions. Quebec's financial institutions are distinct, as is again obvious when we deal with amendments concerning financial institutions. This is of the utmost importance.

The Mouvement Desjardins alone, for example, has assets of more than \$80 billion. This is quite significant. Why did Quebecers have to put in place their own financial institutions? Because English Canada would not give loans to good French speaking Quebecers who needed money. No loans were given. In Quebec, loans were only for English speaking individuals and for their businesses.

So we had to set up our own financial institutions with Quebec charters and rules. But there is not only the Mouvement Desjardins.

Quebec chartered mutual insurance companies were created specifically to answer Quebec's needs. There is also the Quebec Deposit and Investment Fund which manages more than \$50 billion. The money is used to develop our economy, give loans to Quebec businesses and to create partnerships with certain companies. This is what distinct society is all about. It means that we created our own financial institutions, our own corporations and all that.

Now, you will understand that we do not intend to lose what we duly earned by the sweat of our brow. How could we accept that the federal government should decide how we are to be trained, and what rules are to be established even without our consent?

Just look at what the government did our fusion project in Varennes. It decided unilaterally that the federal government's priority was not nuclear fusion.

• (1710)

It acted unilaterally. It did not talk to Quebec, to other investors, and Hydro-Quebec is one of them. It decided unilaterally to pull out of this research.

The great federal master decided on his own to suddenly withdraw or change the rules without taking into account the efforts that we made in Quebec to develop ourselves. We have created

many things. In spite of all our efforts, if we succeed in having an unemployment rate no higher than 10 or 12 per cent, we are considered to be top players, extraordinary people. The federal government has never helped us much in terms of economic development, we have had to do it all by ourselves with a lot of hard work.

Do you think we can have confidence in the federal government for our development? When we think that in R&D in 1989, and I have had the opportunity to do a study of this, federal contracts to Quebec using our tax money for R&D—which is somewhat linked to training, because businesses need to develop, as people need to be trained, it is all connected—research and development contracts or assistance from the government, to businesses or educational institutions were \$1.2 billion less than to Ontario.

I do not recall all the figures exactly, since it is quite some time since I did the research, but I do remember clearly that the shortfall for Quebec in R&D contracts from the federal government was \$1.2 billion. So, if you wonder why there is more unemployment in Quebec than in Ontario, there is the reason.

In the industry committee this morning I asked the people from Statistics Canada who were there testifying what the distribution of Statistics Canada staff was. They said the distribution was good, and relatively representative of the population, but when I asked for details, they told me that there were 4,600 employees at Statistics Canada, and some 3,500 of those were in Ottawa. Now, as far as I know, Ottawa is in Ontario, so when you look at the \$346 million spent by Statistics Canada, and think of the relationship between the total of 4,600 employees and the 3,600 Ontario employees, you will see that the repercussions for Ontario are markedly greater, and that is where the difference lies.

The purpose of all that is to say that we cannot count on the federal government to help us develop. We really have no confidence in them. As the saying goes, once burned twice shy, and let me tell you that we have absolutely no confidence in the federal government to look after manpower training, to look after our jobless.

They say unemployment is running at only 10 per cent, 11 per cent in Quebec. Unemployment is still much too high in Quebec compared with the United States, where it is at about 5 per cent. The worst of it is that there are somewhat fewer unemployed than there should be because those who have run out of unemployment insurance are now on welfare.

Welfare in Quebec is very high. Why? Because people are getting less unemployment insurance, because they are working less. Why is there more unemployment in Quebec? For the reasons I mentioned earlier. Because the federal government has never taken Quebec seriously, and we have always had to work a lot harder to achieve economic growth.

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• (1715)

That is what the distinct society is all about. Quebec will never agree to let the federal government manage its affairs, unless major changes are made.

On that point I conclude and I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to start my maiden speech in the House by thanking my riding for trusting me since, as you can see, I am the youngest member in the House of Commons. It was not certain, when I first stood as a candidate, that my youth would be an asset. As a matter of fact, I would also like to congratulate the Bloc Québécois for being an open and forward looking party which is ready to forge ahead with young people and the whole gamut of society. I am very proud of our party.

I am very happy and greatly honoured to represent the riding of Lac-Saint-Jean. A Tremblay representing Lac-Saint-Jean, a riding which does not shy away from innovation, a riding which could be called the heartland of Quebec. My colleagues here are very close to me, but the riding of Lac-Saint-Jean was the first one to say yes to sovereignty along with the area of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean—I am talking about the 1980 referendum, of course—and which showed the way to the rest of Quebec, as we saw during the last referendum. It is practically the birth place of the Bloc Québécois thanks to my predecessor, Mr. Lucien Bouchard, who is now the Premier of Quebec.

When I say that it is Quebec heartland, I do not mean only in political terms. Michel Gauthier comes from Roberval, the riding next to mine, which is also part of the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean area; this is truly the heartland of Quebec. People in my riding are warm, welcoming, fun-loving people who are easy to get along with.

Unfortunately, it is a riding faced with some problems, and this is one of the reasons why I decided to enter politics. Like many other remote areas in Quebec, in the rest of Canada, and even throughout the world, it is plagued by a serious problem: young and not so young people are leaving in search of a job.

Another reason is the fact that my riding is the victim of the transition from the industrial era to the era of the small and medium size businesses. We will probably need, and I hope so, the help of the federal government to support businesses.

This is also a riding that, I think, is full of potential, full of natural resources and full of people with great potential. Last September, this riding, this region of Quebec showed it can innovate by developing a regional strategic planning. When they noticed things were going badly, they got all the stakeholders together to establish a guideline. The main element that came out was decentralization.

Which brings me to the bill before us, a bill that goes against what our region and Quebec as a whole, what all Quebecers want, namely decentralization. Ultimately, we want to take matters in our own hands. We want to manage our own business. And the more things will be close to the people, the better it will be.

• (1720)

At the last referendum we lost—we lost it, these are very big words—

Mr. Leroux (Shefford): We almost won it.

Mr. Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean): Yes, we almost won it. I had a glimmer of hope. I was thinking: Jean Chrétien's government had promised us it would decentralize, it had promised us a new country. But with this bill, it is obvious we were had. Again it is obvious we cannot trust this government, we cannot trust the federalist system.

This bill increases the federal government's presence in many sectors. We must keep in mind the unemployment insurance sector. It is a well-known fact that a region such as mine needs unemployment insurance. The new bill will have negative effects on my region.

There are also income security programs for children and seniors. This bill also affects support to the provinces for post-secondary education, welfare, labour market adjustment, social development as well as student loans. This is a bill that centralizes far too much.

When we travel throughout Canada, people ask us: "What does Quebec want?" I will tell you: we want decentralization, we want to be masters in our own home. There is a wide consensus around managing our own affairs and decentralizing. A simple example is manpower development. Practically everyone is part of this wide consensus: the current Quebec government and the previous one. Mr. Bourassa, the Conseil du patronat, the labour bodies, the education system, the employment fora, they all agreed. We simply wish to manage our own affairs.

I will conclude my maiden speech by saying that I hope the Minister will have the nerve to amend his bill and to listen to his people, who really want that decentralization. Finally, I wish to thank once again the constituents of Lac-Saint-Jean who showed confidence in one of their young people. I can say that I will always be there to represent my riding, which I consider as one of the most beautiful in Quebec.

An hon. member: Hurray for Lac-Saint-Jean!

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wanted to make a comment because, when the new member for Lac-Saint-Jean arrived in this House, my duties as training and youth critic were transferred to him. I agreed that this duty should be given to him since he is the youngest member in the Bloc Québécois and indeed in the House of Commons. I was once a young man myself,

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of course, youth comes with age, and I think the member showed us in his maiden speech, which was very eloquent, that he has a lot of heart.

He expressed his concerns, and I think I have heard him talk about his concerns for youth before.

He talked a lot about his riding and he talked about youth. I would like to ask him this question—

Mr. Silye: Question, question.

Mr. Discepola: Give him a chance to answer the question at least.

Mr Dubé: It is interesting, Madam Speaker. After total silence this afternoon during this debate on the creation of an important department, the arrival of a new member, a young member who has shown some enthusiasm, has finally waken up this House, and I am very happy about that.

• (1725)

I would like to ask him what he thinks about young people moving away to find work. Does he think it is important that this responsibility be given to the Government of Quebec to ensure consistency and is it possible to finally put an end to the duplication of programs? Does he agree that Quebec should regain control over all its tools? He has already talked about that but, in the few minutes he has left, I would like to hear him say a few more words about his concerns for youth.

Mr. Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean): Madam Speaker, before I answer, I would like to make a comment. It is true I am young, but I was elected by my constituents. In politics, people often talk about youth to make political hay. They like to surround themselves with young people. We all know parties which court young people to show they are open to all age groups and are looking to the future, whereas the Bloc Québécois and Lac-Saint-Jean riding do not believe in tokenism.

They really give tangible examples by electing a young member to Parliament, even if it might be risky; but if you never take risks in life, you never make any progress and those who do not progress regress. That was only a short comment I wanted to add.

I will reply to my colleague that, in a way, youth is in a way a symbol of decentralization. The closer the decision-making body is to the public, the more the people feel they are involved. I do believe in decentralization and the more we decentralize, the more people will feel involved, including young people. Too often, they feel lost in the political debate because they feel it does not concern them. So we just have to get closer to the population for the people to feel more concerned.

[English]

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Lac-Saint-Jean on his maiden speech, his first presentation in the House of Commons.

I would like to make two comments. The first is that I hope this new member does not feel too guilty about taking away the crown of the youngest member of the House of Commons from his colleague from Témiscamingue who held the crown until he showed up. I worked with the former youngest member of the House in the Standing Committee on Finance. I know he tried to hold this government accountable, as he should, and he did a good job. I hope the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean does the same in holding the government accountable.

Having said that, hopefully the member will have time to answer my second comment. In delivering his speech, I noticed some traces and hints of the former leader of the Bloc Québécois. The member's style is very similar. However I hope there is a little more substance to what the member says and does.

The former leader is all things to all people. He is able to deliver everything to everybody in Quebec. He is able to walk on water. He is able to save social programs yet cut at the same time. He is able to promote youth employment. He is able to do all those things but the money is not there.

How does the member propose to add some substance to what he has talked about?

[Translation]

Mr. Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean): Madam Speaker, I believe my first achievement was to run in that election. I am not bragging, but I can tell you that it took a lot of courage. One of the things I wanted to do was not simply talk, but to show that there are still young people out there who want to take part in the political process of this country.

When I decided to go for it, I asked myself: "Are people ready to vote for someone who is only 22?" It was not obvious.

The first concrete sign I got was when students and other young people told me that I was showing them the way and giving them a reason to go for it. Therefore, concretely, I had already done more than just talk. With due respect, I am saying time will tell what I will be able to do in the future, but at the very least I tried, I jumped the fence, as for what will come of it, tomorrow will tell. I had two alternatives: give up or roll up my sleeves and go for it. I decided to try my best and I am ready and willing to start building the Quebec of tomorrow.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S BUSINESS

[English]

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of amending section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, according to the amending formula provided for in section 38 of the Constitution Act, 1982, which amendment would read as follows: "Every citizen of Canada, except one who is (a) confined in a penitentiary, a prison, or a psychiatric institution, or (b) at large from a place referred to in paragraph (a), with or without a lawful excuse, has the right to vote in an election of Members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein."

He said: Madam Speaker, less than 100 years ago a woman from Victoria, B.C. shocked local citizens by showing up to vote. As a widow she had inherited property from her husband and as a new property owner she was therefore qualified to vote according to the way the franchise was limited at that time of Canadian history.

How times have changed. For the law-abiding adult citizens of a nation to have a real voice in how affairs are conducted now is regarded as a hallmark of democracy. In our lifetime thousands of young Canadians have fought and died on foreign soil to defend that basic principle.

Most recently much of the world was shocked when mainland China conducted war games using live ammunition to discourage the citizens of Taiwan from casting their ballots for Taiwan's new president, the first time voting for president had been allowed in the 5,000 year history of the most populated nation on the planet. With great courage over 76 per cent of eligible Taiwanese voters cast ballots, a great testament to how much those free Chinese valued their new found democracy.

Within our commonwealth of nations the Republic of South Africa based the right to vote on racial qualifications which allowed a small white minority to control the much larger black majority, including through a seemingly endless list of human rights violations until the practice of apartheid recently was ended.

I mention these examples to point out what a precious privilege it is to be able to vote and to be able to run for public office rather

than have our lives controlled by totalitarian dictators, or by communist or fascist parties, or by members of a particular race.

Citizens of Canada value that right very highly. Therefore many Canadian citizens were shocked when they realized that our charter of rights and freedoms now has given the right to vote to criminals. Section 51 of the Canada Elections Act disqualified many citizens from voting:

The following persons are not qualified to vote at an election and shall not vote at an election:

(e) Every person undergoing punishment as an inmate in any penal institution for the commission of any offence;

(f) Every person who is restrained of his liberty of movement or deprived of the management of his property by reason of mental disease.

• (1735)

These election act provisions were what Canadians expected.

It is also interesting to note that in the United States, a great democracy and our nearest neighbour, the 14th amendment to the United States Constitution excludes prisoners from voting. Its Constitution has been in the possession of the American people since the 1700s, whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms dates from only the 1980s. It is not surprising that Americans have passed many Constitutional amendments.

At the present time section 748 of the Criminal Code of Canada provides that persons convicted of an indictable offence for which they are in prison for a term exceeding five years cannot hold public office or any employment under the crown. They cannot be elected or sit or vote as a member of Parliament or of a legislative assembly and cannot exercise any right of suffrage.

However, convicted killers have challenged section 51(e) of the Canadian elections act based on the charter of rights and freedoms which now states this in section 3:

Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein.

This issue has been taken before various courts a number of times. For example, in 1992 the federal government lost a case to Richard Sauvé, who was serving a life sentence in Kingston Penitentiary and had sued the government for the right to vote.

Decisions of the court have been divided and appeals have gone to the highest levels regarding both provincial and federal elections. The courts have decided that the Canada Elections Act does not stand up against the charter of rights and freedoms.

I know from talking with Canadian people that the fact the courts have removed those limitations on who gets to vote is offensive to

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the majority of Canadians who are too busy earning a living to appear before royal commissions.

It is a typical example of bleeding hearts who are more concerned with advancing the rights of prisoners than with demonstrating that serious punishments are attached to the commission of crimes.

One of the biggest complaints I hear from many voters in my riding is that offenders get a slap on the wrist for virtually any crime they commit. Working police officers also tell me they feel it is not even worth the paperwork they must complete to get an offender convicted and sent to jail.

It is not as though we throw people into jail at the drop of a hat, even though Canada has one of the highest per capita prisoner rates in the world, second only to the United States. It is not because the Canadian law is so tough that we have so many people in jail. The truth is that crimes of violence have increased by 782 per cent from 1971 to 1994 in Canada. Property crime has increased by 1,031 per cent, although our population has increased by only 27 per cent.

In 1994 almost three million crimes were committed compared with just over a quarter of a million back in 1971. This is an astonishing fact. It is time the government woke up to that. The bleeding hearts, including the justice minister, like only to refer to the past couple of years when certain categories of crime have decreased a little.

Law-abiding Canadians do not feel safe and they want to see offenders punished. One of those punishments should remain that going to jail means losing voting rights. Once offenders have paid their debt to society they should get their voting rights back, but not until that debt is paid.

This position was clearly stated by some witnesses who appeared before the royal commission on electoral reform and party financing which submitted its report in November, 1991. One witness told the commission in Edmonton: "It is a punishment. The reason why they should not receive a vote is that they are not in society in a sense. Until they return to society and act within the confines of our laws, they are barred from certain privileges, one of them being, in my feeling, the right to vote in an election".

• (1740)

In Thompson, Manitoba the commission was told: "We believe that the right to vote is a very special privilege in our country. We believe that once you break the law of the land, part of the deterrent would be the loss of the right to vote as long as you are in prison. I do not believe the charter, at any point, says you have the right to break the law".

The commissioners pointed out that most witnesses supported giving prisoners the right to vote, but none advocated allowing prisoners to stand as candidates.

It also mentioned a brief from the John Howard Society which pointed out that prisoners have the right to vote in Italy, Sweden, Norway and Denmark but not in the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland or the United States.

The number of prisoners and costs raise two more points against allowing inmates to vote. According to testimony of Mr. Jean-Claude Léger, director of operations, office of the Chief Electoral Officer, to the procedure and House affairs committee on April 21, 1994, 6,800 inmates used special voting rules.

According to testimony of the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley, to the same committee, there were 7,502 incarcerated electors. The cost per elector was \$23.81 compared with the cost of \$9.38 for the average registered elector outside the penal system.

That number of votes cast in prison could very well mean that prisoners wanting weaker laws to punish crime could determine the outcome in many elections. Votes of prisoners are being sent to their home ridings to be counted, and many elections are won and lost by small margins.

In the riding of Edmonton Northwest the Minister of Natural Resources won over the Reform Party opponent by a mere 12 votes. I wonder how many were cast from the penal system.

Another close call saw the Liberal member for Edmonton East defeat the Reform candidate by 115 votes. With those numbers, it is clear that in prison voters could readily tip the scales of an election.

How fair is that to law-abiding citizens who must support these prisoners at considerable expense? I do not think it is fair at all. Some on the other side of the House probably do.

The other section of the Canada Elections Act to which I draw attention in my motion is that inmates of mental institutions should not be allowed to vote. That may not be the best way to word my concern, but this is a motion intended to push the government in this direction, not for a finished piece of legislation.

The justice department has hundreds of lawyers. Private members have access to only three. Regarding mental hospital inmates voting, in October 1988 the Canadian Disability Rights Council challenged the present wording of section 51(f) of the Canada Elections Act. In its decision, the court basically said that any mental patient 18 and over who can recite his or her name, age and address can be on the voter's list.

Many Canadians are offended by such a low standard to determine who is eligible to vote; lest we forget that anybody who is allowed to vote is allowed to run for office. I am sure Canadians do

not want inmates of mental institutions running for either federal or provincial governments.

Since I have been here I have been told it seems as though for years perhaps the inmates are running the asylum here. Sometimes we wonder.

Witnesses appearing before the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing were divided about voting rights for the mentally ill or the mentally handicapped.

A member of a hospital volunteer committee stated: "We are fiercely opposed to voting by proxy for persons who are mentally ill. We believe the right to vote is essentially personal and can be exercised only by the holder of the right, not by the third party. The psychiatric population is very vulnerable in that risks of abuse are higher than for so-called normal people".

• (1745)

Many people pointed out how difficult it would be to develop a competency test unless the same test were applied to the general voting population. A common sense solution is simply to require that voters be able to get to their home polling station and once there to be able to complete a ballot properly.

The Conservative government issued a white paper in 1986 on election law reform which recommended that mentally disabled Canadians have the right to be enumerated and vote. The white paper also recommended that no polling stations be established in mental hospitals and that residents of such institutions should not have the right to vote by proxy. However, the legislation died on the Order Paper.

There is one category of residents in mental institutions which I know Canadians do not want to see voting, namely, those confined because they are not criminally responsible, the NCR, or not criminally responsible because of a mental disorder, NCRMD, the two terms used by the provinces for mental institution patients forcibly confined for criminal reasons.

Although the rules and details vary from province to province, basically these patients are detained under federal legislation which is administered by the provinces. Having that label means they were deemed to be ill at the time of the criminal offence and therefore were never convicted of an offence. It is a label which has been applied to some of the nastiest criminals in our history.

Currently in British Columbia there are 130 NCR patients detained in the mental institution which has a total of 174 detainee beds.

In Alberta, 36 NCR patients are lodged in two mental institutions. Overall Alberta has 1,000 psychiatric beds and about 10 per cent of those are for forensic.

The figures are small for Saskatchewan and Manitoba with 16 NCR patients under board review in Saskatchewan. Twelve are in

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Saskatchewan Hospital. Manitoba reports 35 NCR patients in mental institutions representing about half of the psychiatric patients of that province.

Newfoundland reports six to eight in the provincial mental hospital's forensic unit. There were seven or eight in New Brunswick and four or five in Prince Edward Island. Nova Scotia seems to have the greatest difficulty providing this information for me as they are in the process of restructuring.

Neither of the territories has its own forensic mental facilities. Instead NCRs are sent to B.C. from the Yukon and are sent to Alberta from the Northwest Territories.

With the largest populations in Canada, Ontario and Quebec also have the highest numbers of mental patients who are not criminally responsible. In Ontario approximately 550 NCRs account for about 20 per cent of the overall mental patient count of 2,400 to 2,600 beds.

Quebec has 750 NCR patients but it also has review board hearings on others. In 1994-95 there were 988 Quebec hearings, plus six judged unfit for hearing, for a total of 994 patients who were in some form of mental treatment for criminal reasons.

I hope all hon. members are aware that there are many Canadians with mental illnesses of one sort or another. For example, a friend checked herself into the mental illness unit of our local hospital when a drinking problem led to a suicide attempt. She was voluntarily confined but only briefly. She had absolutely no interest in politics at that period in her life.

Section 51(f) of the Canada Elections Act excluded from voting persons confined involuntarily or not able to manage their own affairs due to mental illness.

Canada's standards are changing about including people with various mental disabilities in group homes, sheltered workshops and so on where they often make a real contribution to their immediate families and to the community in which they reside.

The fact that the mentally disabled are loved and valued does not mean they must be allowed to vote. All too often the mentally disabled merely become the pawns of their caregivers. These mentally disabled Canadians are not independent. Even their sources of information can be readily controlled. Therefore, for their own protection as well as to protect the voting process, I believe it is simply common sense not to turn over the running of Canada to people who are mentally incapable either of managing their own affairs or of standing trial for crimes they may have committed.

• (1750)

I must repeat that the people who are allowed to vote are also allowed to run for office. That role is not appropriate for the mentally handicapped.

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A final point I wish to raise is a recommendation for an amendment to section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Sections 2 and 7 to 15 can be overridden by an action of Parliament alone, as provided by the override clause in section 33. According to section 33 of the charter, Parliament or a provincial legislature can insert a clause stating that it is passing a given piece of legislation notwithstanding specific provisions of the charter.

Additionally, any federal or provincial law containing such a notwithstanding or overriding clause has to be reviewed and the declaration re-enacted at least every five years or it will not remain in force.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Mr. Chuck Cadman, president of an organization called CRY, for crime, responsibility and youth. He stated:

I certainly support Darrel on this motion. Anybody who's been convicted of a crime against Canadian society has lost their right to vote. When they come out of an institution, fine, but while they are serving their time they should not be a factor in any decision making on who is in power or what the law should be.

Also, Mr. Dave Langlois of the Vernon Courtwatch Society stated:

The members of Citizens Courtwatch Society entirely support your private member's motion No. 143 to amend the charter of rights and freedoms to prevent convicted criminals from voting.

Our government, supreme court and citizens must come to realize that the charter acknowledges that all rights are not absolute and must be in balance with the rights of the law-abiding citizen. A vast majority of our democratic citizens, I can assure you, agree fully with this motion.

I would therefore like to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to make this a votable motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nick Discepola (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to participate in order to give the government's response to the Reform member for Okanagan—Shuswap on this private member's bill.

[*English*]

This motion raises the issue of whether individuals confined to penal and psychiatric institutions should be restricted in the exercise of their democratic rights. We are urged to consider equally the advisability of an amendment to section 3 of the charter which enshrines the right of all Canadian citizens, without exception, to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein.

I would begin by stating that we on this side of the House do not consider that a constitutional amendment restricting the application of this guarantee is advisable. I say this for several important reasons, related both to the nature of rights protected under the charter and to the legislative history of these issues.

The charter itself recognizes the need for a balance between individual rights and societal interests and provides a mechanism for achieving this balance quite equitably.

Section 1 of the charter provides that the rights and freedoms it guarantees are subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law, and can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. The existence of this special balancing provision provides legislators with a significant measure of flexibility. Although legislation may contravene individual sections of the charter, such as section 3, the government had the opportunity to demonstrate that this legislation is justified, once again, in a free and democratic society.

The charter has therefore established an important dialogue between the courts and the government, as legislation is scrutinized by the judiciary for consistency with constitutional requirements. The Supreme Court of Canada has indicated that government restrictions on rights will be justifiable under section 1 of the charter when they are designed to accomplish a pressing and substantial government objective and when the means used to accomplish the objective are proportional. Legislation that does not conform to these criteria will be struck down, but this does not preclude Parliament from introducing new, and often better, legislation on the same subject, with qualifications added to ensure the full protection of charter rights.

• (1755)

This dialogue between Parliament and the courts is clearly illustrated by the legislative history relating to inmate voting. The 1985 enactment of the Canada Elections Act defranchised all inmates and in 1993 the prohibition was struck down as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Richard Sauvé case.

It is clear from the supreme court's decision that restrictions on the right of inmates to vote will violate section 3 of the charter. But as I have stated, that does not mean the government is precluded from acting, for it always has recourse to section 1.

In the Sauvé case the court found that the government had not met the burden of demonstrating that a complete ban on inmate voting was demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society, as the prohibition was drawn too broadly. This step opened the possibility that certain more narrow restrictions on inmate voting might be justifiable.

The challenge for Parliament is to find a reasonable restriction that can be justified as an appropriate limit on individual rights in light of the compelling public objects.

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In seeking to find an acceptable compromise after the Sauvé decision Parliament reviewed two major reports on electoral reform, both of which have been critical of the disenfranchisement of all inmates and both of which proposed concrete alternatives.

In 1991 the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, more commonly referred to as the Lortie commission, had recommended that only persons convicted of an offence punishable by a maximum of life imprisonment and sentenced for 10 years or more be disqualified from voting.

In 1992, the special committee on the electoral reform of the House of Commons had recommended in its all party report that inmates convicted of an offence punishable by a maximum term of life imprisonment be disenfranchised.

While noting these options, Parliament chose a different approach. Under Bill C-114 the impugned paragraph of the Canada Elections Act was re-enacted in 1993 to provide that all prisoners serving a sentence of two years or more be disqualified from voting. It was felt that individuals sentenced to a term of two years or more should be viewed as serious offenders and that forfeiting their right to vote would send a powerful message that serious crimes are inconsistent with the concept of civic responsibility and respect and rule for the law. The voting prohibition was also viewed as a means of further sanctioning the offender. In other words, the measure supported the punitive objective of the law.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Parliament's new proposals soon ended up back in court. Inmate Sauvé and others filed court actions in the Federal Court, trial division, challenging the constitutionality of the newly enacted provision of the Elections Act under section 3 of the charter and also under section 15, the equality to rights provision.

The cases were heard jointly by Mr. Justice Wetston and in his decision released in January of this year, Justice Wetston concluded that the restriction on inmate voting did not violate section 15. However it violated the inmates right to vote in section 3.

Although Justice Wetston found that the objective of the voting prohibition were pressing and substantial, he felt that the wording of the legislation provision was overly broad and, therefore, failed the test of section 1. He pointed out equally that Parliament could provide sentencing judges with the authority to disenfranchise convicts on a case by case basis rather than enact a blanket disqualification for persons serving two years or more.

The federal government has filed an appeal of Mr. Justice Wetston's decision to the Federal Court of Appeal. Until this litigation runs its course it would be premature to consider any further legislative action, be it constitutional or otherwise and to address the issue of inmate voting.

It would be prudent for Parliament to wait to receive guidance from the Federal Court of Appeal and perhaps even the Supreme Court of Canada on whether the existing prohibition on inmate voting is sustainable under the charter. If not, what other sorts of options for restricting the right to vote would be permissible?

Any reconsideration of this issue by Parliament prior to obtaining this input would not only be premature but might well colour the government's defence on existing legislation.

Governments should not consider amending the charter each time an adverse court ruling is handed down. The constitutional amendment procedure, as we know, is lengthy and complex and is not the proper way to address these issues. The charter was never intended to be amended on a piecemeal basis in response to discrete court decisions. Our challenge therefore in the case of restrictions on inmate voting is not to amend the charter but to sustain reasonable legislative provisions that strike an appropriate balance between individual and collective interests.

• (1800)

Although both the Lortie commission and the special committee recommended the continued disenfranchisement of certain individuals on the ground of mental incapacity, the government of the day chose not to accept these recommendations. Instead, the law prohibiting voting by mentally ill persons was repealed as part of Bill C-114.

Finally I should say that the question of who has the right to be qualified for membership in the House of Commons under section 3 of the charter is a separate and distinct question from who should have the right to vote. The Supreme Court of Canada has not yet had the opportunity to pronounce on the extent to which it is possible for the government to restrict the conditions of membership in the House and still remain within the bounds of section 3 of the charter without recourse to section 1. It is not clear that it would be inconsistent with section 3 of the charter as currently worded.

These and other reasons mean that restrictions imposed on the rights of inmates and those of psychiatric institutions to become qualified for membership in the House of Commons may be sustainable within the bounds of section 3. In short, incarcerated persons may not be—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Order. The member's time has expired.

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this issue which my colleague from Okanagan—Shuswap has brought to this House. This is an issue

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which is very critical in this day and age: should federal inmates have the right to vote.

We just heard from the Liberal member that the government has filed an appeal to Judge Wetston's decision that inmates should have the right to vote. I find that very interesting because it was not too long ago that a judge in this country made the decision that the use or abuse of cocaine and alcohol were an excuse for murder. These very same Liberals came back into the House in a hurry to reverse that decision. Now the member stands up and says that gee whiz, they are going to have to file an appeal and they will see if it works and so on. The fact is that they just do not have the intestinal fortitude to turn that decision around.

Should federal inmates have the right to vote is the big question. There are some questions which have to be answered here and I am going to make an attempt at that. Why are we at this stage today? Why are we even discussing this here when it could have been a votable issue? And why is this not votable? Why are we discussing Motion No. 143 on a non-votable basis? I will cover that in a moment. Another question relative to federal inmates having a vote in this country today is: When will this government start putting the affairs and issues that are relative to victims in this country on the front plate instead of those affairs relative to criminals?

Why is this motion not votable? The solicitor general said on the day this issue broke that the government believes that withholding the right to vote is reasonable. If the solicitor general believes that withholding the right to vote from federal inmates is reasonable, then why is it that this motion could not have been voted on tonight in the affirmative? Why is that so unreasonable? What is most obvious is that there is no will to do so in the federal government.

Why are we at this stage today? Why is it that judges appear to be making decisions that are not in the best interests of the country and not in the best interests of victims?

One of the Liberal members is suggesting that we whip the judges. We can understand the methodology and the logic coming from over there.

● (1805)

Let me give these folks across the way a little lesson in some of the decisions judges are making today. I ask whether judges are making rational decisions today and whether decisions like that of Judge Wetston to allow criminals, federal inmates, the right to vote is a good one.

Let us hear what B.C. Supreme Court Justice Sherman Hood said before acquitting a man of sexually assaulting a North Vancouver waitress: "No sometimes means maybe or wait a while". That is a judicial decision in this country which will be used as jurispru-

dence in other decisions. Does that make any sense? That is supposed to be a rational decision coming from this country's judiciary.

Northwest circuit Judge Michael Bourassa on sexual assaults in the Northwest Territories said: "Sexual assaults occur when the woman is drunk and passed out; the man comes along, sees a pair of hips and helps himself". That is another judicial decision that is a total avoidance of the protection of victims. The government, just like on the issue of the right of federal inmates to vote, does absolutely nothing about it. Government members sit here and pass rhetoric off as though we were supposed to buy it.

I will give another example. Members are asking over there how is this relevant. It is relevant because judges are making bad decisions and Justice Wetston made a terrible decision. Members over there just do not like to hear this.

In my province in February 1996: "Port Hardy, British Columbia provincial court Judge Brian Saunderson gave 57-year old Vernon Logan 'an absolute discharge' even though Logan pleaded guilty to possessing child pornography. The judge said the law banning child pornography violates the charter of rights", it sounds familiar, "because it is an infringement of one's freedom of thought, belief or opinion as unfettered access to reading material is necessary to exercise those freedoms".

With this kind of charter of rights decision by a judge to let off someone who possesses or is dealing in pornography, the very criminal act he was charged with, because it is a violation of his rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, how far is this government going to allow this to go? That is the question.

David Snow was charged in Vancouver with kidnapping two women and trying to strangle a third. The judge declared: "I cannot conclude that the placing of the wire around the neck of the victim and the placing of the plastic over her head are sufficient enough to establish intent to kill".

I ask that group, which is somewhat more quiet now, are these kinds of decisions made by judges, including the decision to allow federal inmates the right to vote, in the best interests of law-abiding Canadian citizens? The answer is no.

If the solicitor general is to be believed, if he says he believes that withholding the right to vote is reasonable, then why does this government not come in here and do it? What is wrong? The fact is this government, those people who are speaking on the other side of the House, believe it is fair.

● (1810)

Let us deal with what criminals are getting today. Are we going too far to the left where the Liberals are? What do criminals have?

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We know they get their conjugal visits. We know they get GST rebates. We all know they are getting the Canada pension plan—

Mr. Milliken: They do not.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): The member says that they do not but they do. He is not well informed about these issues. We know they get old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. We know they have access to legal aid at the cost of the taxpayer. I believe that Clifford Olson is up to his 32nd litigation at the cost of the taxpayer. We know they have the right to sue. We know they have the right to refuse work. We know they get overtime and on and on it goes.

The final insult to law-abiding Canadian citizens is in front of them: Offenders now have the right to vote. This government refuses to do anything about it. However the government will not have to because when it is replaced in the next election, something will be done.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to correct a few of the inaccurate suggestions made in the speeches by my colleagues opposite.

The Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada made an excellent speech, although he did not remember certain facts which occurred during the course of the last Parliament in relation to the bill he was referring to, Bill C-114. It was passed toward the end of the last Parliament in a successful effort to amend the Canada Elections Act.

Had he been a member of the electoral reform committee which was an all-party committee established in this House that basically drafted Bill C-114, he would have been aware—

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member opposite does not want to listen to this. I recognize that facts are always troublesome to members of the Reform Party.

It was a government bill but the basic outline of the bill had been designed by a committee. No matter what the hon. member for Fraser Valley East has said, there had been a previous court decision on this very issue. The law as it existed before Bill C-114 was passed provided that no person incarcerated in a prison had the right to vote. There had already been a decision, I believe by the Supreme Court of Canada, although my recollection is hazy. It has been some years since I have looked at this problem and I did not plan on speaking today, but hearing so many inaccuracies I thought I should try to correct the record.

There had been a court decision concerning the previous law. It was for that reason that when Bill C-114 came along, the committee considered the issue of the right of inmates to vote and came to a decision.

There was a referendum in Canada prior to the passage of Bill C-114. In that referendum because of the court decision throwing out the provision in the electoral law that prohibited all persons in prisons from voting, all federal inmates in Canada had the right to vote in that referendum. Some did exercise their franchise and voted in the referendum. If we listened to members of the Reform Party we would think the sky had fallen in but it did not. The referendum took place and those persons exercised certain voting rights.

Then the committee studied the whole issue and decided to recommend there be a limited right to vote for persons incarcerated in prisons. My recollection of the committee report is hazy. I will tell the member that I am accurate within two years. I am surprised he has not looked at this because it might have been relevant to his speech, but as I say, facts are troublesome to members of the Reform Party. The fact is the committee recommended that all inmates who were serving a sentence of seven years or more be permitted to vote. In my recollection that was a unanimous recommendation from the committee.

• (1815)

The Conservative government, notwithstanding the fact that it had a majority on the committee which agreed to that recommendation, decided that was too generous and so it opted for a two-year term. That is, every person serving a sentence of two years or more would be disqualified from voting. It meant that all federal inmates were automatically disqualified because by definition persons serving prison sentences in a federal institution must have been sentenced to two years or more.

I recall very well the day the bill was debated because I was the electoral reform critic for the Liberal Party. I moved amendments to this section because I said at the time, and it is on the record, that this section would be thrown out by the courts as being too restrictive.

Seven years was chosen based on the legal advice that the committee received at the time. We had to have something reasonable in terms of length in order to justify it under the charter of rights and freedoms. It was the committee's unanimous view that seven years was a reasonable time and could be defended before a court. It also constituted a reasonable restriction on the right to vote given in the charter which granted to every Canadian citizen the right to vote.

The members of the Reform Party want to take that right away from citizens that they consider unworthy of the right. Once you start inching away at who is unworthy you can start to whittle away other rights.

I know there will be some members in the House who might want to take away rights of members of the Bloc Quebecois to vote. I know there are some who would like to take away the right of members of the Reform Party to vote. I am not one of them. I am a firm believer in the principle that citizens should have the right to

Private Members' Business

vote. That principle is stated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which I fully support.

I moved amendments that would have taken away any restriction. I moved a seven-year amendment. I believe I moved a five-year amendment in an effort to get a compromise that I thought could be supported before the courts and that would win the support of members of the House. The Conservative House leader at the time, the Hon. Harvie Andre, would hear none of it. He was insisting on the two-year rule and it was that or nothing. Because the bill had a lot of other amendments in it besides this one item, we agreed to pass the bill.

I remember the day we did it because some fancy agreements were made between the parties to get the bill through. I think it was a Friday afternoon before Easter or something like that. It was certainly a time before the House was to break for a period of at least a week.

I remember the day. This particular clause caused great difficulty because in my view it was unconstitutional and would be found to be so by a court. And it was. The surprising thing is that the government is bothering to appeal this. In my view it is a waste of money. This clause is contrary to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Stinson: We already know your view.

Mr. Milliken: Obviously the hon. member shares my view in this regard, otherwise he would not have brought forward this motion. He wants to change the charter. He obviously shares my view that this is unconstitutional. He wants to fix it so that it will be constitutional. He wants to take away the right of all persons in prison to vote as I read it.

It says a penitentiary and everyone knows what a penitentiary is. He says everyone in a psychiatric institution should not have a right to vote. A person who checked in because he or she needs treatment for depression would not be allowed to vote. That is the effect of the hon. member's motion. That is why the committee when it considered this matter was so reluctant to move in this area. It was because of the difficulty in choosing who should be voting and who should not. It was an extremely difficult question.

The committee did not think it was something that it ought to make a decision on and ought to fix in the law. It was better to give the franchise on a broad spectrum, allow everybody to vote, than try to determine who is reasonable and who is not. If we went on reasonability I am sure we would have psychiatrists in here checking out some of the members of the House to see if they were suitable for voting.

Mr. Stinson: Yes, and you would be the first.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member says I would be the first one. I think I would find more of the opinion that he would be higher on list than where he put me on the list. I am happy to humour him by volunteering to undergo psychiatric observation for the purpose of determining whether I should vote or not if his rule ever became law.

Fortunately the hon. member was unable to persuade the procedure and House affairs subcommittee to make this motion votable. I assume he went there and made his pitch and the subcommittee members decided that this motion ought not be votable. There were other motions that were more important and I can understand why. The hon. member is really nit-picking.

• (1820)

There is a wide variety of opinions on whether or not inmates ought to have the right to vote. I am inclined to the view that they ought to have that right. I say that directly.

Taking away the right to vote makes practically no difference. There are something like 12,000 inmates in federal penitentiaries in this country. In the referendum, very few of them exercised their right to vote. I do not have the precise figures, but I would guess it was something around a third of that group at the most who exercised their right to vote in the referendum.

The same figure would apply in an election campaign. Most of these people would not be interested in voting and would not cast a vote. If they had the right, under the rules that were in place in the referendum which, no doubt, would apply during an election, their voting rights would be exercised in the area from which they came and not in the area where they are incarcerated.

I have a very large prison population in my riding and, frankly, I would not mind if they were each voting in Kingston. That will not happen. They will be voting across the country. If the hon. member does not think he can persuade some of these people to vote for him, I can understand why he might oppose allowing them the right to vote.

Most hon. members would find that in terms of the voting patterns of inmates, they reflect that of the general population. They are not a group that is going to vote as a block on any issue. In my view, the casting of 12,000 votes out of the millions that are cast in an election campaign would have practically no substantial effect on the outcome.

I know it bothers hon. members opposite to think that people who have been sentenced to prison are somehow exercising this kind of democratic right. I am at a loss to understand how it hurts the rest of us.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the motion presented by the hon. member, my colleague from Okanagan—Shuswap. I will read the motion again so that we know what we are debating today.

Private Members' Business

This is a motion that is meant to be a guideline for future legislation. We are not debating legislation now. The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should consider the advisability of amending section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, according to the amending formula provided for in section 38 of the Constitution Act, 1982, which amendment would read as follows: "Every citizen of Canada, except one who is (a) confined in a penitentiary, a prison, or a psychiatric institution, or (b) at large from a place referred to in paragraph (a), with or without a lawful excuse, has the right to vote in an election of Members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein".

I would like to touch on three areas related to this motion. First, I would like to talk a little about how we got to where we are, how we got to be in the House debating whether or not prisoners should be allowed to vote. It seems absolutely incredible that things have slipped far and we have to be here debating this motion today.

Second, I want to talk a little about what my constituents said when a court decided that prisoners should have the right to vote.

Third, I would like to discuss briefly the issue of people who have committed so-called less serious crimes and whether they should be allowed to vote.

What was the direct cause for the debate today was the decision in *Sauvé v. the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada*. There are many other things behind that and I will talk a little about a few of them.

Prior to this decision, persons imprisoned in a correctional institute who were sentenced for two years or more could not vote in federal elections. In *Sauvé*, the court declared this law to be invalid because it violated the prisoners' right to vote under the charter and because there was no compelling justification for violating this right.

I would like to touch briefly on the purpose for removing the right to vote in the first place. Some of the reasons given was the enhancement of civic responsibility, the respect for the rule of law and the imposition of an additional sanction on persons committing serious anti-social acts.

• (1825)

The hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap covered very well why prisoners should not be given the right to vote so I will not get into any more discussion on that. The question I have to ask is: Are these not far more important to society than the rights of individual prisoners? In other words, are these reasons given that disallow prisoners from voting not more important than the rights of the individual prisoner? I will talk a little bit more about that later.

The *Sauvé* decision concludes that disenfranchising prisoners would make prisoners feel isolated from the community, would impede the subsequent reintegration of prisoners into the community and would prevent prisoners from experiencing any of the rehabilitative effects which flow from political participation. These are the main reasons given by *Sauvé* in his decision.

Again, by removing the franchise from prisoners, Judge *Sauvé* reasoned that this could make prisoners feel isolated from the community. Well, prisoners are isolated from the community. The intent is for prisoners to be isolated from the community. That is part of the punishment and part of the deterrent for criminals to discourage them from committing crimes. The other reasons given by Judge *Sauvé* really do not make any more sense than that.

When my constituents heard that the supreme court had ruled that all prisoners, including people like Clifford Olson, would have the right to vote, they could not believe it. Few issues had sparked this kind of reaction from my constituents as this issue had. People just could not believe it had happened. They asked me how we had come to this. They wanted to know how this kind of thing would happen and how we had arrived at this. They also wanted to know how the court in Canada was making the law. They asked me whether it was not my job as a member of Parliament and the job of the House of Commons to make the law.

Those were some of the feelings, some of the questions and some of the reactions of my constituents to this decision. I wonder whether the constituents of the members across the floor, who are heckling and speaking out against the motion presented by my hon. colleague, reacted any differently. I doubt very much that they did. In fact, they have acknowledged that their constituents reacted in exactly the same way which does not surprise me.

How have we arrived at this point? If we could pick a pivotal time in history, we would have to go back to 1972. It was a Liberal government. I have seen the quote in *Hansard* where Solicitor General Goyer said that the Government of Canada should change the main focus and the priorities of the justice system so that no longer was the protection of the citizenry the most important focus and the top priority. He said that we should change that focus so that the rights and rehabilitation of the criminal were top priority and only secondary were the rights of citizens to be safe and to feel safe in their homes. It is unbelievable. That is not a direct quote; it is a paraphrase but it is accurate.

It was a Liberal solicitor general and the present Liberals have no different view from that. They still believe that the rights and rehabilitation of the criminal should be top priority. They are wrong and Canadians say they are wrong. The top priority should be the protection of our citizens in all cases.

Private Members' Business

Some people would argue that criminals who have committed so-called petty crimes should be given the right to vote while those who have committed more serious crimes should not have the right to vote.

I want to refer to something that happened in New York City a few years back. William J. Bratton was a former police officer who became head of security for the New York subway system. Bratton enforced this kind of environment in the subway system. He said all criminals, including those who commit the crime of writing graffiti on walls or panhandling, should be treated as serious offenders. He cracked down on this so-called petty crime.

By cracking down on petty crime Mr. Bratton lowered the serious crime as well in a dramatic way. When he later became the police commissioner of New York City he engaged the same policy

to take petty crime seriously. When he did that the crime rate in New York City dropped dramatically.

When considering this motion it is important that people who commit petty crimes know that even a petty crime is serious and is a good enough reason to lose the right to vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringette-Maltais): There being no further speakers rising and as the motion has not been deemed votable, the time allotted for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

It being 6.30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.31 p.m.)

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