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control of our own destiny, I think that Quebecers will choose Quebec and that, in the fall, they will decide that it is time they had their own country.

[English]

Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my hon. colleague's earlier remarks he referred to Bill C-76, particularly the Canada health and social transfer, somehow implying that our change to a block funding format is reducing the flexibility or changing the control the province has in the areas of health, education and social assistance.

I sat on the finance committee and listened to witness after witness say that they were concerned the strategy was quite the opposite, that perhaps the block transfer gave too much flexibility to the provinces.

The hon. member must be able to defend that. The people of Canada are seeing just the opposite. Under Bill C-76 we are not infringing upon or tying the hands of the provinces but doing quite the opposite. We are giving them far more latitude, far more opportunity to spend the moneys transferred to the provinces in the way they see as best.

• (1250)

There were questions earlier of my hon. colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, that said we were somehow creating new guidelines and controls on the provinces. However, as the parliamentary secretary indicated very clearly, the words mutual consent are just that. The provinces would have to agree to any new standards and guidelines and if they did not, fair game.

How can the hon. member convolute Bill C-76, particularly the Canada health and social transfer, into any kind of representation that the federal government is trying to put more controls and more strings on the provincial responsibilities and ability to use their funding in those areas?

[Translation]

Mr. Crête: Madam Speaker, I think that the question is quite pertinent, because it gets to the heart of the debate. In effect, the organizations from English Canada which testified before committee had the gall to say that, if the provinces were given too much latitude, they might do things that hinder their objectives as organizations.

Let us look at what led to this situation. Twenty-five or thirty years ago, the federal government opened up its floodgates and began funding all kinds of programs. This contributed to our current debt. These organizations, which have all along been fed by the federal government, fear that when the government runs

out of money, instead of simply saying so, it will decide to reduce transfers to the provinces, which will in turn reduce the capacity of these organizations to act.

Their reaction is understandable, absolutely normal and healthy. They want to survive and are looking for funding. Each group is doing it the best way it knows how. But did you see any Quebec organizations behave in such a fashion in front of the finance and human resources development committees? Did any of Quebec's organizations appearing before the finance committee say "we could not live with the decision to give Quebec jurisdiction over social programs?" No, not a one.

The main government for Quebecers is the government of Quebec. The government of Quebec is responsible for providing the fundamentals to promote at the very least the survival of Quebecers as a people. Many years ago, Quebec realized that that was not enough. We cannot live on unemployment insurance benefits alone. We do not want people telling us that they are our cash cow, that they hold the key to our development. What we want is control over our own development and the ability to implement measures that will get us out of difficult situations.

We, not just Paul Crête the separatist but all Quebec labour stakeholders, have been systematically petitioning for jurisdiction over the labour portfolio for 10 years now. The Liberal Party of Quebec, the Conseil du patronat du Québec, the unions, and everybody in between all agree.

It is obvious that Quebecers took part in the Canadian confederation in the hope of harvesting good economic benefits. Today, they are realizing that they do not have enough power to develop to their potential in this system. Worse yet, they are realizing that the federal government would force them to use the model that the other provinces want.

Take for example the changes made to the loan and bursary program this year. The main section says that all provinces with a loan and bursary program must meet all of the requirements of the federal minister. The anglophone provinces have no problem with that, but Quebec developed a unique loan and bursary program 25 years ago. When this program becomes compulsory, which is why in Quebec particularly, students were opposed to this bill, Quebec will have to revamp its program completely to make it conform to national standards, without the social adjustments we want to include.

In Quebec we are willing to have government pay a larger share of tuition fees. We are willing to let students have a better balance of bursaries and loans. The Canadian model does not want to develop that. Let them go ahead and develop a different model, but let Quebec have the option of doing as it sees fit.