

Supply

Unless the definition has been changed, "mutual consent" does not mean imposition of national standards; "mutual consent" means just that, that is that the parties involved will have to give their consent. This shows once again that the federal government wants to give the provinces a wider flexibility.

This is about flexibility, decentralization and co-operation; not about centralization as advocates of separation are fond of suggesting.

What deserves condemnation is not the pieces of legislation mentioned in the motion, but the official opposition's attitude. Earlier, we heard them, they are already talking about voting yes. The referendum campaign has not even been launched yet. The Parti Québécois did not even have the courage to hold a referendum in its first eight months in office.

Obsessed as it is with the referendum question, the official opposition alters facts, indulges in grandstanding and tries to depict to Quebecers a Canada that does not exist. I know Quebecers. I know they expect their governments to put their financial houses in order, to boost the economy, and do their utmost to enhance job creation. Since the election, that is what our government has been trying to do.

The budget that was tabled in February reduced federal spending by 7.3 per cent, a first in our history.

It was a difficult decision, and we did not make it with a light heart. But we had to do it, for the sake of the future of young Canadians.

We know jobs are important for all Canadians. That is why we launched the infrastructure program, which created nearly 20,000 jobs in Quebec alone.

Trade missions under the leadership of the Prime Minister in Asia and Latin America have resulted in contracts adding up to almost \$10 billion. We know that Quebecers and all Canadians want to feel safe in their cities and towns. The gun control bill will contribute to making communities safer.

That is what we mean when we talk about good government, and that is what Canadians want. That is what Quebecers want, too.

I repeat that what should be condemned is not the bills mentioned in the motion, but the motion itself.

• (1055)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was very surprised to hear the hon. secretary of state for Parliamentary Affairs say, especially at the beginning of his speech, that when the Bloc members go visit the people in their ridings, they are not performing their duties as members of Parliament. I want him to tell me that I was not carrying out my duties as a member of Parliament when I met

some fifteen senior citizens of Trois-Rivières to talk about the upcoming old age pension reform and listened to their concerns that the federal government would cut their old age pension as it did with the unemployment insurance benefits.

I think we are acting very properly when we get together with our constituents. This does not stop us from taking the opportunity to talk about the real solutions to these problems that would give the province of Quebec more control over its own development.

When we meet with people who complain about the unemployment situation and tell us that 40 per cent of all new welfare recipients end up on the welfare roll because of the new restrictions put on UI benefits by this new government, which is more Conservative than Liberal, are we not performing our duties as members of Parliament?

When the federal government decides to cut all research and development in sheep production, a promising new industry which is quickly expanding in Quebec and in Canada, and we are asked by the people: "Who took that decision, what is going on in Ottawa? What is wrong with them? Do they have their heads in the clouds? They are cutting R and D", are we not performing our duties as members of Parliament? I think the member for Saint-Léonard should reconsider his position on this issue.

On the other hand, given the centralization efforts of the current government, Quebecers will obviously have a very clear choice to make. This is the most positive aspect of the federal efforts. Everything is quite clear. When they talk about national standards and their willingness to interfere in the day care sector and impose national standards so that Alberta and Quebec are both treated the same way, we realize that their initiative does not make any sense and is doomed from the start.

It does not make sense for the federal government, which has no authority in education, to create a human resources investment fund and, by a devious device, intervene in the area of education instead of reducing unemployment insurance premiums, because less money is needed to finance the unemployment insurance fund, and giving the difference back to the people who do finance the fund. The unemployment insurance scheme is not there as an excuse to create an education department. It is there to provide benefits to workers between jobs. Is this not an intrusion of the federal government where it has no business?

There is also the agreement on internal trade. Let us talk about it. This agreement was signed by all provinces and the federal government. It is designed to ensure that internal trade is at least the equivalent of what we have with NAFTA in external trade. But the federal government tables a bill with the insidious provision that it will be able to rap the provinces on the knuckles if it does not like a decision, if a province does not measure up. It is acting as both judge and jury.