

Supply

government admits the \$6 billion infrastructure program created only a few thousand short term jobs.

• (1135)

Perhaps what is most disturbing about this announcement and more specifically related to the motion we are debating today relates to labour market training. It is clear from the government's package that the Prime Minister broke faith with Canadians when he announced he was giving labour market training to the provinces.

The minister is trying to sneak through the back door a new made in Ottawa social program scheme which will intrude on provincial jurisdiction. He has created two mega programs and for all these new programs all the provinces must reach agreement with the federal government. The Liberal government needs to give power and resources to the provinces with no strings attached. If not, then the gesture is meaningless. The government simply does not understand what decentralization means.

Let us move on now to decentralization, an issue that has garnered significant attention of late, especially given that the EI changes break the Prime Minister's Verdun commitment which he reiterated on Tuesday last week.

It is ironic that we debate the government's broken promise of decentralizing manpower training today. Today at committee we will hear the bureaucrats explain to us how Bill C-96 also fails to decentralize powers. In fact, the bill may even create new powers for the federal government. Even if this new power never manifests itself, the bill at a minimum entrenches the status quo of federal intervention into provincial areas of social policy jurisdiction, areas I am sad to say for which the new EI bill fails to relinquish power.

I find it quixotic, though I suppose not entirely uncharacteristic, that the government would try to enact legislation which engenders and champions the notion of centralization and the status quo. To do so amidst the decentralization forces pressuring the country to change is profoundly absurd.

Recent events have shown to all that fundamental change is required of our federation. There is almost universal agreement that the federal government needs to rethink its current role as provider of services and programs. In areas of social policy we cannot continue to support a system which separates the revenue raising capacity from the expenditure function. In other areas too there is strong evidence to support devolution to the most logical level of government.

In October the Reform Party released its vision for a new confederation. Reform believes that decentralization will permit future governments to respond more effectively to the needs

of ordinary Canadians. It also addresses many of the historic concerns of individuals from all provinces.

Reform's plan includes giving provinces exclusive control over natural resources, job training, municipal affairs, housing, tourism, sports and recreation. It gives the provinces control over setting their own interprovincial standards for health, welfare and education, replacing federal cash transfers with tax points, and allowing provinces to raise their own taxes to finance social programs.

This decentralization will lead to a more balanced federation, one in which Ottawa will play a co-operative role rather than a dominating role. The proposals outlined in the new confederation speak to the long term. They furnish Canada with a vision. They put flesh on the conceptual bones of a new federalism. This is the kind of leadership that has been conspicuously absent from the current government benches.

How can one govern without a coherent direction? It is incomprehensible. I am not talking about prescience here, but about the courage to say: "These are my ideas; this is my vision". We have seen none of that from the government.

The traditional response to fiscal crisis has been centralization, consolidation and concentration. This instinct increasingly leads to failure. Centralized control and consolidated agencies create more waste, not less. There are many reasons that Reform speaks for this vision of decentralization and they will be outlined.

Decentralization will engender greater flexibility allowing institutions to respond more quickly to changing circumstances and client needs. Decentralization will create more effective program and service delivery, as the deliverers and providers of government assistance are closer to those they serve.

Decentralization will reduce waste, overlap and duplication created by concurrent jurisdictions and poorly co-ordinated government programs and services. Decentralization will engender greater fiscal responsibility, for a government that spends the money it raises will inherently be more accountable than one that spends the money someone else collects.

• (1140)

Decentralization in regard to the tax system is most compatible with the tenets of federalism. The efforts of a federal form of government is local autonomy. In its designated spheres, each unit is free to exercise its policy discretion unencumbered.

It is important to remember in this debate on labour market training that decentralization is neither a celebrated buzzword nor a passing political fad. It is a policy movement that has been vigorously championed in Canada since the 1960s. It represents reconfiguring the locus of attention in the federation.