

redistributing money. Still, one should keep in mind that these measures are indeed unconstitutional.

The position of the official opposition is clear in this regard: it demands that the federal government withdraw from provincial areas of jurisdiction without any ifs, ands or buts. In other words, within the Canadian confederation, the official opposition demands that the constitution be abided by, and that the withdrawal of the federal government from social programs, health care, and education be offset by the transfer of tax points so that taxpayers do not end up paying more. It would balance out. The federal government would lose one or two per cent in taxes to the current province of Quebec, and thus the tax burden of citizens would not get heavier.

Therefore, we see that, with this second piece of legislation, Bill C-76, aimed at implementing the budget, the federal government keeps on attacking, and even intensifies its attacks against the provinces, especially Quebec, by setting national standards in the areas of health care, post-secondary education, social programs and welfare.

I now come to Bill C-88. Bill C-88 deals with internal trade in Canada. It is a matter which was the subject of an interprovincial agreement signed last year, on July 1st, by the provinces, the federal government, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, and which is to come into force on July 1st, 1995. There is, in this agreement, a certain legal vagueness due to the wording of article 1710—which is at the heart of the agreement and could become the stumbling block—providing for mechanisms to settle possible disputes between two provinces, or between the federal government and one of the signatories; the least that can be said about these mechanisms is that they are somewhat lacking in clarity.

The reason is that the signatories agreed that any dispute settlement mechanism would be based on the good faith of the parties and would not, in any case, be of a legal nature. There was, on April 10 of this year, less than two months ago, a federal-provincial conference of provincial, territorial and federal ministers, in Calgary, where, we are told, nothing was said about the fact that there were new texts and new ways of doing things in the areas of dispute settlement mechanisms.

Yet, two or three weeks ago, the federal government came up, without any warning, without debate, with Bill C-88 where, in clause 9, it imposes or rather assumes powers it never mentioned to the parties and for which it was not mandated by said parties.

• (1150)

I will read clause 9, which will create quite a conflict because the federal government really assumes powers although, in the

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spirit of the agreement, it is solely one partner, equal to the other signatories. This question is extremely important and was called by the Premier of Quebec a "trade war measure". He did not mince his words. Given the credibility of the Premier of Quebec in this area, we can see the importance of what I talking about.

Clause 9, which is the main element of Bill C-88, reads as follows:

For the purpose of suspending benefits or imposing retaliatory measures of equivalent effect against a province pursuant to Article 1710 of the Agreement, the Governor in Council may, by order, do any one or more of the following:

- (a) suspend rights or privileges granted by the Government of Canada to the province under the Agreement or any federal law;
- (b) modify or suspend the application of any federal law with respect to the province;
- (c) extend the application of any federal law to the province; and
- (d) take any other measure—and this is important—that the Governor in Council considers necessary—what it means is to bring the province in step.

In subclause 9(2), they even make the following precision, and I quote: "In this section, federal law" means the whole or any portion of any Act of Parliament or any regulation order or other instrument issued, made or established in the exercise of a power conferred by or under an Act of Parliament".

Before the parties gave any kind of authorization, before any discussion or joint action, without any mandate, the Government of Canada, a legitimately elected government, unilaterally, arbitrarily and arrogantly decided to add a provision whereby it granted itself the authority to set any stubborn province right.

Just think what that could mean in the case of Quebec. Personally, that is one thing I hope Quebecers will seriously think about during the upcoming great consultation. This is the type of Canada we will have in the future where there will be only one real government, Madam Speaker, and it will be this government, arrogant, arbitrary, cut off from the people and ignorant of regional interests; the so-called provincial governments will become mere regional governments. Imagine what irreparable damage will be done to Quebec where we firmly believe to be, where we claim to be a distinct society within Canada with different habits, thinking patterns and background.

That clause, as others is typical of this government's way of doing things, in Ottawa, capital of Canada, a country soon to be centralized, unitarian, accepting no debate or consultation and no social debate, a debate which the Canadian population should demand, especially westerners. Without any social debate as we have in Quebec, a clause like this one could have serious consequences. The intent of that clause would certainly have a catastrophic impact on Quebec.