

Government Orders

programs of support to provinces for post-secondary education and welfare, labour market adjustment and social development programs, and student loans."

What we see today, with Bill C-96, is a strengthening of the federal government's hold on each of these areas and on all of them collectively. I was listening earlier to the member who expressed some deep feelings about this. I remember that the Minister of Human Resources Development has told us repeatedly that we simply did not understand that things would be better. It seems the only ones who are optimistic about Bill C-96 are the government party and the minister.

I would like to refer to a press release issued by the Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes on October 5, 1995. It says that the Board of directors of the ICEA, formed of academic, labour and community representatives, is unanimously opposed to Bill C-96. The organization invites all its partners to mobilize and denounce this bill which undermines the equity principle governing our social security system in Canada and denies the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces over manpower training and development.

It is not a sovereigntist institute from Quebec which says that, it is the Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes. It seems that only the minister and the cabinet believe that Bill C-96 is a good thing. No, it is not a good thing. The same press release says: "Bill C-96 is, for the most part, one of the worst scenarios, something that our Institute denounced last fall, during the hearings of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development." This indicates not only that the minister consulted, but that he was told that this was the worst thing to do. And yet, he went ahead and did it.

I would also like to mention the position of the Quebec government, because I believe that our viewers should know what Quebec thinks of this intrusion.

• (1210)

Mrs. Harel, the Quebec Minister, said: "When you read Bill C-96, you understand why the federal Minister of Human Resources Development did not respond, last spring, to my pressing demand for a federal-provincial conference on this reform. The bill is the opposite of the Quebec consensus on manpower. The opposite of the single window principle. This is proof that the federal government is committed to continuing and even increasing the costly duplication and overlap in the area of manpower in Quebec".

So, when the minister tells us, as he did during Question Period, "I consulted, I went to see my counterparts in the other provinces", we can only say that as far as the Quebec minister is concerned this was not the case. Once again, we have a minister who is intruding on provincial areas of jurisdiction and in particular Quebec jurisdiction, in a dangerous manner.

I would also like to mention the SQDM. Yesterday during Question Period, the Minister of Human Resources Development said that during the summer he met, through officials, with representatives from the SQDM and that agreements had been signed. He implied that everything was fine. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth. On October 4, 1995, the SQDM stated its position on Bill C-96 in a press release and I quote: "The board members of the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre ask the federal government not to set up a parallel structure of partnership and not to take initiatives overlapping Quebec jurisdiction in the area of manpower development".

Bill C-96 has catastrophic consequences. Starting with Mr. Valcourt, a former minister in the previous federal government, and now with the present minister, we are headed toward disaster in the area of manpower management.

In fact, in his recent report, the auditor general mentioned that job creation through the manpower development programs of our Canada Employment Centres was more costly in Quebec than elsewhere. Why? Why is it that the federal government is less efficient in Quebec than elsewhere? Simply because it stubbornly refuses to give Quebec all of the powers in this area.

To conclude, I would like to give specific examples affecting ordinary people. We are not talking about a piece of paper called a bill, but about real people suffering through real unemployment.

A few weeks ago, a woman who wanted to start her own business dropped by my office. There is a program called Self-Employment Assistance which would have allowed her, because she was receiving unemployment benefits, to start a business, to create jobs. Believe it or not, there is just enough money in this program to satisfy a handful of individuals in my own riding, and she was told to look for a job rather than to create one since, if she created one, she would no longer be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. That is the great way unemployment is being perpetuated in Quebec. We prefer to give money to people to do nothing rather than help them create jobs for themselves and for others.

I will conclude on this note: I look forward to the day where a minister will have the courage to tell his or her civil servants that the federal government will no longer interfere in the manpower area in Quebec and that it is going to give the province all of the powers in this field, which will result in huge savings. We will, at last, be able to create the jobs that everybody needs.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the saying goes, the proof is in the pudding. Let me tell you that I believe this holds true for what the Chrétien government intends to do with regard to social program reform, especially unemployment insurance.