

*Government Orders*

jobs. That is the kind of positive initiative that can happen when we think in terms of integration.

Another example of integration can be seen in our government's strategic initiatives program. This program is important since it provides the government with the unique opportunity to experiment with program design that will support future policy development.

In September 1994 the government in partnership with the Government of Nova Scotia announced the launching of such a program. Success Nova Scotia 2000 will assist 3,000 young Nova Scotians to gain valuable work experience in leading industries using internships as an important part of their learning culture.

• (1020)

It is part of our commitment to find better ways for young people to secure jobs. By bringing together a full range of Canada's social and labour market programs, we are setting a new course and making a positive difference in Canada.

Bill C-96 provides a strong basis for this new direction. It ensures the structure that is in place for the federal government continues bringing programs and services together while working with our partners in the provinces and the communities across the country.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ):** Madam Speaker, ever since the Bloc Québécois arrived in the House of Commons, Ottawa has treated us to power plays of every description. First, it created the Department of Canadian Heritage. In so doing, Ottawa denied the existence of the Quebec people and the government gave itself a mandate to defend and promote Canadian culture and Canadian identity.

Then came power play number two: the Department of Health. With this decision, the government expanded and consolidated its control over an exclusively provincial jurisdiction.

And now for Ottawa power play number three. This time, it is about human resources. I am referring to the bill before the House today, the act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development and to amend and repeal certain related acts. With this bill, the department blatantly ignores the existing consensus in Quebec on manpower training and directly intrudes in this provincial jurisdiction.

A fourth power play is now looming, and I am referring to reforms in programs connected with income security for seniors. Of course for the past two years, every time he had to field a question in the House, we saw the Minister of Human Resources Development rise indignantly and play the same tape over and over again: "The document is wrong, you misread, and you do not understand".

However, there is every indication that Ottawa will use this reform to save money, again at the expense of the seniors, and the minister responsible seems to be the only one in this House who is misinformed.

In the February budget that was supposed to reshape Canada, using a Tory recipe with a Liberal label, the Minister of Finance announced a reform of programs relating to income security for seniors. This reform was to take effect in 1997. According to the Minister of Finance, it will be based on the following five principles: first, undiminished protection for all seniors who are less well off, which means there will be no increase in benefits, but payments to the less well off will be maintained at present levels.

Second, a continuation of full indexation of pensions. Third, eligibility for OAS benefits will be based on family income. People should realize that this will significantly change the present system. In fact, OAS has always been universal, but after the Chrétien government's reform, the amount of the OAS cheque will depend on family income.

Fourth, benefit levels will be reduced as income levels rise. Ottawa's so-called positive approach carefully conceals its plans to lower the ceiling for the clawback.

Fifth, control of program costs. In other words, administration of the OAS system will have to cost less.

This sketchy outline of Ottawa's intentions received a stinging response from Ms. Blackburn, Quebec's income security minister. In a press release dated March 2, the minister commented that the federal government was launching another attack on the incomes of seniors and that the reform announced in the Martin budget would permanently destroy the balance of the current OAS system.

The minister also pointed out that the decision to provide OAS benefits on the basis of family income would mean that more seniors, mainly women, would have to turn over their benefits to the federal government. The minister went on to say that women had won recognition of their independent status in society, but now, because of budgetary cutbacks, once they were retired their status would depend on that of their spouse and their family income and that, considering the measures proposed by Mr. Axworthy and Mr. Martin, one wondered if women's rights meant anything at all to the federal government.

• (1025)

The minister's final conclusion is that such a change in calculating old age pensions makes them no longer a foundation for financial security in retirement but a social assistance program.

Seniors will be entitled to an old age pension if their income places them in the category of persons with modest means. We