

*Government Orders*

As one who listens to citizens and to seniors in particular—and I know that all members on this side of the House have heard them—I can tell you that they are concerned. They are not used to typing on computer terminals to get information. They are very concerned about this. The government is saying that they are moving their services closer to the people, but installing a computer terminal in a municipal location is not the way to go.

My main concern—and that is clear from the debate today—is that Bill C-96 will enable the federal government to deal directly with agencies and individuals in matters coming under the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces like postsecondary education, security and manpower training. It is certainly not a case of jurisdictions being unclear.

The hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine suggested that we look ahead not back. I would actually encourage him to go back to the Canadian Constitution and read it over. The Constitution states that these areas are indeed areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

The hon. member closed by saying: "Let the members of the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois, the people of Quebec and the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre come and help us, the federal government, to do what we have set out to do, so that it can be better done, in partnership".

He got it all wrong. It should be just the opposite. The federal government should be the one trying to help provincial governments in exercising their exclusive jurisdictions. That is what decentralization should be about. It should not be about the federal government decentralizing its action by going over the heads of the provinces to deal with agencies, businesses and individuals. This is not decentralizing. It is by-passing, going over the heads of the provinces. That is not the same thing, and it certainly does not qualify as decentralization.

On the contrary, that is centralizing. You keep the money, spend it according to certain rules or national standards and go over the heads of the provinces to deal directly with businesses and individuals in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

• (1300)

The past often gives us an indication of what the future holds. I will not go very far back in time. I will focus on the past couple of years. As the opposition's critic for training and youth, I would like to remind the House of a bill I mentioned a number of times already to give you an idea of what the minister has in mind when he talks about decentralizing. I am referring to the infamous Bill C-28 that the House passed on June 23, 1994. What is so special about this bill that the Minister of Human Resources Development is responsible for? Subclause 3(1) states that, from now on, the HRD minister will designate himself appropriate educational authorities for the provinces, which flies in the face of the Constitution. I say it again because

people have to understand. Over time, people may forget the connection between certain legislative measures passed by the government. Bill C-28 is an example of a case where the federal government ignored the provinces.

Subclause 14(7) states that Quebec can opt out, with financial compensation, like before, provided that its program meets every requirement and that each of its components is similar to that of the federal program.

The Quebec government is free to do what it wants and, yes, will even get money. However, that money, which, incidentally, comes from Quebecers who pay 24 per cent of their taxes to Ottawa, will be paid only if certain conditions are met. In other words, Quebec is free to do what it wants, but if it does not do this or that, the federal government will cut funding. What a nice way to view decentralization, in a field of provincial jurisdiction. Such is the spirit that guides this government.

I followed every initiative of the minister regarding his employment development strategy for young people. One must admit that, in two years, it has not met with much success. The figures for the last two months show that the unemployment rate for the under-25 group is exactly the same as it was two years ago, when the minister took office. This is quite the strategy.

My limited studies in political science taught me that a political or administrative strategy was good to the extent that it produced results. Otherwise, the strategy was not good and had to be changed. I invite the Minister of Human Resources Development to change his strategy for helping young people find jobs. At the moment, he is in the process of trying to duplicate Quebec provincial programs at the federal level. For example his Youth Service Canada is identical in every respect to the Quebec program Jeunes Volontaires. He has tried something involving work placements as well, but these are things that have already been done by the Government of Quebec and the Société québécoise de la main-d'oeuvre.

During the referendum campaign, Quebecers heard and saw all this, with training and employability enhancement programs that change daily, but the last time I looked there were 102 federal and provincial programs. The total has even gone as high as 108, but a few were combined after that. It is still a huge number, and people cannot find their way around all these programs.

A number of stakeholders in the Société québécoise de la main-d'oeuvre, including Mr. Béland, the president of the Confédération des caisses populaires et d'économie Desjardins du Québec, the FTQ, labour federations, and the Conseil du Patronat as well, have been unanimous in demanding that the federal government pull out of this area. Despite their repeated demands, however—and this is where there is a danger when it comes to public opinion—there is a certain fatigue setting in and the strategy of the government across the way, apart from