

tunately members of the Reform Party will not do a lot to make sure the poorest in society are protected. They will make sure the rich do very well.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

Now that the federal government has announced its decisions concerning social program reform, the Quebec government is requesting that a federal-provincial conference of ministers responsible for manpower be held as soon as possible to discuss the consequences of the federal measures announced, in particular the reduction in transfer payments.

Does the Minister of Human Resources Development intend to call as soon as possible this spring a conference on the impact of his social program reform, as requested by Quebec?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am very pleased to see that the Quebec government has finally decided to participate in federal-provincial discussions on social security. I think that it is a step towards resolving several problems with the social safety net. I hope that the hon. members of the Bloc Quebecois will now follow the lead of their Quebec colleagues and show the same spirit of co-operation as the Quebec government.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the minister that the last federal-provincial conference on this issue was scheduled for April 18 and that the previous government was in power at the time.

Here is my supplementary. Will the minister finally agree to comply with the Quebec National Assembly's unanimous resolution, made on April 14, 1994, to abide by the unanimous consensus among all stakeholders that Quebec has to have exclusive jurisdiction over manpower training?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in the House, we have already put forward an offer to all provinces for a new rationalization of our manpower training programs. Several provinces have indicated an interest in responding. We have already signed an agreement with the province of Saskatchewan. We are well into negotiations with several other provinces.

With the new found interest of the Government of Quebec in working with us on social security reform, I would hope we

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could have serious discussions. I would be more than happy to sit down today with Madam Harel and the Government of Quebec to discuss exactly that.

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● (1430)

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, at the world summit on social development in Copenhagen last Thursday the minister of human resources spoke about his government slapping a tax on automatic teller machine use and an electronic information tax. Is the minister prepared to pop this trial balloon right now?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at this very important conference of 190 countries both government officials and NGOs were discussing how we could come to grips with the questions of unemployment and poverty. One of the most serious issues was how to deal with the rapid rise of currency speculation where a trillion dollars passes boundaries every single day; 80 per cent of it is pure speculation.

One of the areas discussed was how we could provide deterrence to that kind of large scale disruption of financial markets, disruption of investment and certainly disruption of people's lives. It is very strange when it appears the Reform Party is trying to defend currency speculators.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that comment is really something else. The average person who goes to an automatic teller machine in Canada is not exactly a currency speculator.

The minister of human resources has stated on a number of occasions that the answer to our unemployment problem lies in information technologies. What does he think he is doing with comments like this? He is discouraging people who are looking at new information technology when he is talking about putting a toll gate on the information highway.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no question new technology provides enormous potential for growth, productivity and development. It is also equally important that as any new technology is introduced, whether it is the automobile, the steel plough or today's new technology, people are affected by it.

The question that was being examined at the Copenhagen conference was whether there can be fair distribution of the benefits, the growth and the wealth being created to ensure all people have equal opportunity for jobs, equal opportunity for a good life and equal opportunity for their children's security.