

[English]

**Mr. Walker:** Madam Speaker, in the Canada social health transfers and in the debate we are having, the words distinct society do not appear. I will put that case aside for another debate.

In the history of federal-provincial relations in the country there have been many arguments by many provinces against the federal government. Some of those have been conceptual fights over the federal-provincial authority and some have been fights over money. Depending on the nature of the Quebec government at various times it has pursued aggressively some of these objectives. In the same fashion, British Columbia took the federal government to court over cutbacks in the Canada assistance program.

The constitutional debate is always on the horizon in Canada, but it is not here today and is not central to the debate today. What is before the House is an opposition motion debunking the cornerstone of the government's approach to resolving the problems of the country.

We feel we have a very pragmatic and effective way of permitting provinces to develop their own social programs. There will be programming responses from Quebec, which I am sure will be entirely different from programming responses elsewhere in the country. This facilitates the development of programs that are very responsive to the Quebecois. People in other provinces may choose to do things differently. I see this in the context of a very wide ranging series of problems we are dealing with.

• (1230)

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak to the opposition motion before the House today, and I may recall the wording: That this House condemn the government's legislative agenda, which makes clear its intention to usurp provincial jurisdictions and construct an entirely centralized state, as can be seen from Bills C-76 on the Canada Social Transfer, C-88 on the Agreement on Internal Trade, C-91 on changing the name and mandate of the Federal Business Development Bank and C-46, which confirms that the Department of Industry is responsible for regional development in Quebec and Ontario.

These are legal terms we use in the House, but basically, the real question being asked today, and it has already been asked this morning by the federalist parties, which demonstrates their failure to understand the issues at stake for Quebec, is as follows: Why is Quebec again disturbed by this attack by the federal government which is intruding in a variety of areas? Why is Quebec again being a spoil sport? Since today is the first

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day of June, 1995, I think we should make this show-and-tell month.

In fact, after the offensive fought during the Trudeau years to put in place a system the Liberals now want to resuscitate, we had a strategic retreat by the Conservatives when, because of nationalist members within the Conservative caucus and because it was impossible to get through the bureaucracy at Industry Canada, for instance, the government decided in favour of what I would call a by-pass operation. It created the Federal Office of Regional Development and other regional agencies to get around the centralizt bureaucracy and find parallel channels for spending federal money in the regions. However, that was still at a time when there seemed to be enough money or in any case the government was still willing to borrow money, all of which helped to run up our current debt.

Today, the "arteries" are being closed down. There is no more blood for the system to pump. Whether we try to preserve the Conservative-built bypasses or whether we return to the centralizing approach, the system needs oxygen and does not meet the objectives. This is what has led us to the present situation of 1.2 million welfare cases in Ontario and 800,000 in Quebec and a debt that will soon reach \$600 billion. I think these are the symptoms of the system's failure.

We are seeing a repeat of the events of the 1970s. The federal government decided it had the solutions to all the problems in areas of jurisdiction other than its own. Let us take Bill C-76 dealing with the Canada social transfer as an example. The federal government has decided to intervene in the areas of health, social assistance and post-secondary education—all areas of provincial jurisdiction. It has decided to establish national standards, which take no account of the economic and social realities of Canada's regions.

Let us look at a few examples. Bursaries and loans, for one. The bursary and loan system was changed on the sly so the provinces are now forced to comply with the wishes of the federal minister in this area. In Quebec, we developed a different model, and here Quebec will have to choose between complying with federal standards and making the rest of the population pay for the constraints established by the federal government.

One thing I learned as a member of the human resources committee on its cross-Canada tour is that there is not one Canada and that there is no single solution to the problems raised. The approach of setting up national standards, as we have seen in health care and other sectors, at a time when the federal government is cutting back, leads nowhere, except to frustration. This is the reason for today's motion by the opposition, which is to make people aware, in June 1995, a few months away from the referendum in which Quebecers will decide whether they want to leave this madhouse, as René Lévesque described this dysfunctional and dead-end system.