

Supply

manage their affairs. In other words, we spent \$900 million and we have to say, "Let us hope that it was effective". But in practice we cannot say that it was.

Let us be clear on this. The program may have been a great success, but Parliament, Canadians and Quebecers have no idea that it was. Should we eliminate programs of this kind in the native community? We do not know; we are not in a position to make a decision. Or, on the contrary, should we increase the amounts allocated to reach the goal of economic equality among native people, Canadians and Quebecers? No one knows.

Much more important, were the native people sufficiently involved in the process? No one knows because in the days when Parliament could be satisfied just to send money to the reserves and say that we did what we had to do are long gone. The government announced that native self-government would take effect in the coming months. Thus, we must ensure that the people who will have self-government can look after themselves, by giving them training, experience and programs to help them prepare for it.

A special committee like the one we propose could help Parliament answer all the questions for which I just said we had no answer.

• (1300)

Parliament must be informed, it is only just. Just for the taxpayers whom we represent, and just for the program recipients whom we also represent.

The people for whom these programs were designed do not have to suffer the shame of being accused of illegally receiving the taxpayers' money. We often blame the recipient, the welfare recipient, the unemployed, the health care consumer for abusing the system.

As usual, someone is being made the scapegoat. We see the horrifying practice whereby victims even start feeling guilty. Blaming recipients for spending public funds is easy, whereas the onus is in fact on Parliament and managers to act so that the taxpayers' money is spent wisely.

Those who were in charge of ensuring that public funds were well spent in Canada did not do their job. The result of their carelessness is a catastrophic public debt and stronger biases against government program recipients, for example, health care consumers and welfare recipients and unemployed Canadians.

In closing, I would like to say that, to continue performing their duty, taxpayers must be sure that their money is well spent. They must be convinced that public funds are not being wasted, that cuts will be made where they should be. A committee such as the one proposed must be able to do the proper analysis, thereby allowing Parliament to implement the necessary budget

measures, to put the public finances in order and to restore the confidence of Canadians in their representatives.

Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette-Maltais (Madawaska—Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening for several hours to the members of the Official Opposition, and I do not understand what is going on. I will explain what I mean and then I would like to get some answers from the hon. member for Jonquière.

The Bloc Québécois proposes the setting up of a new special committee to address issues which are already being looked at by standing committees of the House. Is this an indication that, even though the existing standing committees of the House have not yet started their work, the members of the Official Opposition do not trust them?

I also want to refer to a motion tabled in the House earlier this week by the Minister of Human Resources Development, which said: "That the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development be directed to consult broadly, to analyse, and to make recommendations regarding the modernization and restructuring of Canada's social security system—"

This motion to modernize programs was approved by 216 members, while 52 were against it. Who objected to a comprehensive review of social programs which are just as necessary to Quebecers as they are to the rest of Canada? I look forward to the answers of the hon. member for Jonquière.

Mr. Caron: Mr. Speaker, I will provide two examples of issues which this committee could examine and which are not currently being looked at. There is the matter of overlapping, for instance. As someone involved in the movement for Quebec's sovereignty for more than 20 years, I have seen every day examples of overlapping of federal and provincial services. I have yet to see a comprehensive study, whether by the public accounts committee or another committee of the federal government, on this issue. I have never seen any such study.

• (1305)

There is also another type of issue which this special committee could look at. As you know, Quebec and Ontario have their own police force, while the other provinces rely on the RCMP. To what extent do Ontario and Quebec taxpayers subsidize the police force elsewhere in the country? We would like an answer to that question and to the fact that some expenditures paid by certain segments of the population do not directly benefit them.

Essentially, what we want is not a technical or technocratic committee but, rather, a political committee which, on behalf of the public, would examine government spending and say to a minister that his department spent so many dollars on such and such a program. Then ask him to justify that spending. And if the spending is justified we, politicians, will tell the public that it was indeed justified. However, if managers cannot justify some expenditures, we will say, on behalf of the public that this