

Government Orders

5, 10, 15 or 20 years and have a permanent impact on economic restructuring in eastern Canada, especially in eastern Quebec.

Suggestions like this lead us to call on the government to redo its homework and take a few more months to work through the bill aimed at making the changes needed to implement the budget.

Let me give you another example of this type of situation. In the next few months, we will see what I would call the automation of Canada Employment Centres. It is rather paradoxical that, next year, the so-called Human Resources Development Department will be focusing in a major way on replacing workers with machines. Computers will be made available to the jobless in some places. I can clearly detect in that the approach taken with seniors and voice boxes. But the people who deal with unemployment centres may not know how to work automated systems.

Citizens will be further removed from civil servants, aggravating the problem of individuals becoming file numbers and having a tendency to abuse the system. So, instead of striving for realistic goals, this measure will be counterproductive because machines are replacing people. The human resources sector differs from the car manufacturing sector in that robots can be used to build cars but, if you want to help individuals find work and reenter the workforce, it is essential that they establish good contacts in terms of professional counselling and feel that the people they deal with at the employment centre are able to help them with their personal circumstances.

• (1250)

As I recall, when I was touring with the committee on the Axworthy reform, someone came to me with a proposal that I think would have been much more appropriate than these changes. What of it was now up to the users, the UI recipients, to evaluate or assess the services they receive? Perhaps that, based on the information provided by the users, the government would abandon this reform, or at least make sure that the human element is not removed, and plans for adding new technologies.

I would also like to list a few areas where we urge the government to go back to the drawing board. It was decided to reduce to nil—that is no small cut—funding for agencies involved with public participation in and awareness of international development. Every organization with a mandate to make Quebecers and Canadians aware of the importance of international co-operation will not be getting a penny more. This was done in a very cavalier fashion. The organizations were informed by phone and, in my riding, the CREECQ received written confirmation after it had taken effect.

It is rather insulting and appalling for organizations dedicated to ensuring that there is a future for co-operation. On the downside of this decision is the fact that these organizations also

drew a parallel between poverty in our part of the world and in the South. It made it clear that everything is interconnected and that choices made in Northern countries create poverty in the South. We often have the same attitude towards our underprivileged as we do towards third world nations.

These organizations made sure people were aware of the reality. Given the government's current tendency to copy the American model, which entails the disintegration of the middle class, it is easy to figure out that it wants to get rid of those who question its social measures.

This appears to be a very bad decision which will result in Quebecers and Canadians being less aware of the need to provide international assistance.

I also want to mention the abolition of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. This is another example of an unacceptable announcement. No ministerial statement was made. It was during a debate that we were informed that the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women would disappear. This is another case of getting rid of those who question the government's actions regarding those who are in difficulty and who need a more flexible society.

The last example which I want to give relates to agriculture. The subsidy for industrial milk is reduced by 30 per cent. This means that either producers or consumers will be affected. And which consumers will be most affected if the price of butter goes up? It is those who have less disposable income. When the price of a pound of butter goes up 10 or 15 cents, that increase is not felt by those who earn \$60,000, \$70,000 or \$80,000, but it has a direct impact on the budget of the poor, who have no choice but to reduce their spending even more.

All this is to tell you that we kind of wonder why the reaction to this budget is relatively positive in English-speaking provinces, while it is negative in Quebec. The media gave us the answer yesterday. Thanks to the federal system, Quebec is the province with the highest proportion of poor in the country. After 125 years, that finding alone would be enough to convince me that we must change systems and have control over our development as a whole. This is essential.

Whether in the context of an annual budget such as this one, or in the context of a more fundamental decision, Quebecers have a very different vision of development. This is why we want the federal government to do its job properly, while we are still part of that system. We are asking it to go back to the drawing board and to reconsider a number of legislative provisions which will have to be passed to implement this budget. We also hope that, when the time comes for Quebecers to make their fundamental decision, they will realize that a new system is essential for their development and also to change things which can no longer be tolerated in Quebec.