

*Government Orders*

But this will not solve the problem; our problem is one of structural unemployment. We are not showing our people how to become self-sufficient. We are not giving them their own decision-making tools, we are not allowing them to manage their own affairs. These tools should be transferred to them, people should be consulted, and yet it is not done; it is one of their main comments.

I would like to point out that I will supply the Minister of Human Resources Development with a summary along with these briefs. I will also give it to the parliamentary committee, which is on the road right now.

But I would still like to raise a few points. As I believe was mentioned by some hon. members a few minutes ago, shared time is one solution to the employment problem being used by the CNTU in the Gaspé Peninsula. People are ready to discuss solutions, to look at all the possibilities. As I said earlier, fishermen throughout the Atlantic provinces, not just in Quebec, mentioned that they are hoping, and indeed are asking, for a bigger share, for permits with more variety.

Some of the things I heard were amusing. There was one woman who said: "The Liberals are forever consulting, but we need more than that right now. The barn is on fire and we need a fireman who knows what to do".

Madam Speaker, as I told you earlier, I was accompanied by two commissioners. I am merely repeating what people told me. One woman asked: "Why are we reforming social programs, when the problem is elsewhere?" The problem is in the lack of employment, in the fact that the government is facing excessive debt, that over half this debt is owed outside the country and that we are going to be in serious trouble if we do not get our finances in order soon.

The message is that the Bloc Québécois agrees that the deficit must be reduced and said so during the election campaign. However, we do not want cuts to be made blindly. We want there to be respect for the public. If there is an objective to be met, people should be asked what tools they need to reach it, and whether it is feasible. If it is not feasible then, as a society, we will have to make a choice. We will always need fishermen.

• (1615)

One of them told me: "I am willing to work 12 months a year, but is the Minister of Human Resources Development willing to thaw the gulf in the wintertime? Is he willing to stock it? If so, I could fish 12 months a year".

Of course, we had a bit of fun. In spite of the seriousness of the problems, people in the Gaspé Peninsula came to these hearings with a smile on their face and kept their cool. They suggested solutions. They also sent a serious warning to the government. If it realizes what their needs are and gives them the necessary

tools, they will meet the objectives that the government wants to set behind their backs.

[English]

**Mr. Mac Harb (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, let me begin by congratulating the government and the Minister for Human Resources Development on his initiative. Indeed, it is a bold approach that in my view will respond to the nineties and beyond.

This is one segment of an overall strategy and overall action plan which will be proposed by this government over the next year or so in order to respond to a commitment made by the Prime Minister on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada as well as on behalf of the people who elected him. Those commitments were made in *Creating Opportunities* or the red book as people might call it.

There are three aspects of the proposal. One looks at the whole way in which we deliver our social programs in Canada, as well as human resources training and development. The second aspect will look at the overall industry in Canada and the way we deliver our goods and services here and abroad. The third aspect is to try and put our house in order in terms of looking at the overall finances of the government.

There is no doubt in my mind that if one is to look at Canada from the outside, which the United Nations has done on a number of occasions, one would come to the conclusion that we live in the greatest country on earth. I knew that 20 years ago when I came here. I knew I was going to heaven on earth. I am sure that my colleagues in this House and all Canadians would agree and would know that we live in the greatest land on earth.

To keep Canada in the forefront in terms of equality of social programs that we provide our citizens, the quality of education that we provide and access to the finest medicare in the world, we have to do a number of things.

Before I enter into a detailed explanation I want to share with you some statistical information in terms of the status quo, the situation that now exists in Canada.

Today approximately 10 per cent of the Canadian population are considered to be senior citizens. By the year 2031 that number will double to the point where more or less about one in every four Canadians will be a senior citizen. In parallel with that if we are to look at the number of people who are entering the workforce, we have a shrinkage. Today there are a lot less people in the workforce than there were 10 or 15 years ago.

The challenge is to use the output or the productivity of those people who are in the workforce to try and support all of the programs, social benefits and everything else in order to contin-