

Government Orders

convinced that all parliamentarians are concerned about this situation.

I would like to remind you that we have, in Quebec, a very respectable and respected organization called the Forum pour l'emploi. Of course, this employment forum expressed the wish to see all manpower policies transferred to Quebec, but it also analyzed the social cost of unemployment. It estimated that—I know this will give you quite a shock, so I will say it slowly—the economic cost of unemployment for 1993, that is 1993 A.D., not 200 years ago, was about \$30 billion.

This means that, because the government is perhaps considering maintaining a duplication of structures, our society has to put up with a shortfall of \$30 billion. That is the reality. That is what is unbearable with Bill C-96. Not only will the government not respect the consensus that exists in Quebec, it included in the bill provisions that will allow it to disregard the authority of the Quebec government and give direct funding to organizations like CDECs or direct it through other channels for the delivery of manpower related services, all this without going through the principal stakeholder, the Quebec government.

But this will not last long. Something will happen soon. There will be a grass-roots movement. People will take to the streets when they realize that we cannot support inefficiencies, that there is no reason to tolerate unemployment rates of 11, 12 or 13 per cent, when other western societies are able to give work to everybody.

Since you are telling me that my time is up, Madam Speaker, I will conclude by saying that this bill is unacceptable and that we hope that the government will see the light and respect Quebec's jurisdictions.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to make this speech immediately following the remarks of the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve. I listened very carefully to his remarks and now I would like to rectify a few things. I would like to show all our colleagues in this House, particularly members of the Bloc, that the adoption of Bill C-96 is part of a process that favours change and that supports the concept of partnerships with the provinces.

The leader of the Bloc said himself a while ago that he favoured change but wanted an agreement with the other provinces. I think this bill is very much in line with this idea. There is a partnership between the federal government and the provinces and, of course, there is change.

• (1155)

Any motion aimed at delaying the adoption of this bill seems negative to me and, unfortunately, opposition members sometimes take a negative and very partisan attitude. This is the

opinion I have of the members opposite. They are not as objective as some of us are. The bill we are proposing is about greater openness towards the provinces and a better sharing of responsibilities.

As the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the member for Parkdale—High Park, said so eloquently in the House and I quote: "Bill C-96 is not changing any statutory powers". Listen to this, Mr. Speaker. It comes from an authority on the subject. "It is not taking any powers away from Quebec or from any other province. This bill seeks to enable us to work together in order to deliver programs and services more efficiently at less cost to the taxpayers".

And now the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve is saying that the bill is useless unless it gives new legislative powers to the federal government. How can a member of the Bloc who favours decentralization oppose a bill because it does not centralize enough? He just told us that the bill is useless unless it provides for more centralization. The member may be a centralizing separatist, but not me.

We, in the Liberal Party, are in favour of a flexible federalism and, in this bill, we simply want to confirm the fact that there is now a minister who is responsible for several federal departments. This does not take any powers away from the provinces. Quite the contrary, this bill gives no power to the federal government that it did not already have, except that from now on these powers are in the hands of one minister instead of several.

Our government is deeply committed to reducing spending, and this is why we wanted to reduce the number of ministers and consolidate some of the existing powers and federal departments. The powers transferred to the minister of Human Resources Development are not those of provincial ministers but they are part of powers that other federal departments already had and they are being consolidated.

I know that the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve wishes to hear what I have to say and that he will listen carefully to my speech, so that he can be well informed and can vote for Bill C-96. I know that after hearing what I have to say he will be able to change his mind. As I look at the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve at this very moment I have no doubt that he is in the process of changing his mind. He may even be off to reconsider his position on the bill.

So, to put the excellent words of the parliamentary secretary I referred to earlier in a perspective even closer to reality, he declared that the Bloc members began by saying that the referendum had sent a clear message to the federal government. A very clear message indeed. It showed that a majority of Quebecers do not want separation. The parliamentary secretary went on to say that this was the clear message we received and that we had to work with that in mind.