

Government Orders

to commend the people of the CEQ, the CNTU, the FTQ, the nurses' federation, the union of professional employees of the Quebec government and the union of Quebec public servants, who joined forces to put together a massive petition denouncing the federal government and calling for an inquiry on taxation.

In the end, when they talk about social programs, what do they really mean? We are talking about redistribution of wealth. And when less and less is being distributed, what happens? Wealth is concentrated. That is the evil—the cancer sapping the economy not only in Canada but also throughout the Western world—that has to be denounced and dealt with quickly. Wealth should be distributed, not concentrated as is presently the case.

The government appears to want to distribute wealth, but one must not mistake appearance for reality because, in reality and at the expense of the provinces, it is merely standardizing. It was already standardizing the area of health while at the same time reducing funding. Now, it will do the same not only in the area of social assistance but also, and this is a precedent, in the area of postsecondary education, killing two birds with one stone. On the pretence of bringing the debt under control, the government interferes in a totally unconstitutional way in an area of jurisdiction which, as we know, is very dear to the Government of Quebec in particular and, in Canada as we know it today, is recognized in the constitution as an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

Where will this lead? When cuts are this extensive, it means that social programs will have to be chopped as well. It will become necessary to either cut back funding for education and social assistance or raise taxes or both. But what is disgusting and wicked about all this manoeuvring on the part of this government is that it is designed to pass the buck so that it can wash its hands of the matter. That is what Lise Bissonnette was referring to when she spoke of imperial federalism.

An hon. member: A dictatorship.

Mr. Rocheleau: Finally, I would like to say a word about the future of Canada, because this whole process is part of a vast operation. This is not our saying; it was reported in *Le Journal de Montréal* on March 30, 1995, that two Liberals were fearing a fiscal attack against Quebec. The two Liberals in question, Jean-Claude Rivest, recently appointed to the Senate, and Claude Forget, former Liberal minister in the Quebec government, both distinguished and well known Liberals, said that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada was preparing a major administrative and tax reform in Canada.

• (1745)

Mr. Rivest added that, in his opinion, there was nothing to fear at the constitutional level but the same could not be said at the fiscal level; there is an opportunity for initiatives, whether constitutional or not, that could change the rules of the game one way or the other. That is what is happening.

So, on the eve of this historic public consultation in Quebec, I hope that, in the Canada of the future, as it now appears, Quebecers will make the right decision.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, the hon. member referred to the fiscal coup which is in the making, which could also be called the Stéphane Dion strategy, and which seeks to hurt Quebec after the referendum. We are bracing ourselves for that.

On the other side of this House I see Quebec members who support this legislation, who smile and who do not dare get up to protect Quebec's interests, as they claimed they would do when they were elected. Now that they are here, they are a lot more polite and conciliatory. They are members of a party in office, so they want to protect their personal career. This has priority over the interests of the people, the riding and the Quebec nation which they are here to represent.

I want to say a word about the last federal budget and its major component, which is the new structure of transfer payments. This is an extraordinary camouflage exercise, and I will tell you why. The government is trying to make us believe that it will be more flexible, that things will go better and that the same services will be provided with less money. Less money, more standards and probably more controls.

I participated in an English radio talk show, in Montreal, with the Minister of Human Resources Development. The moderator asked: "Does this new Canada Social Transfer mean that the federal government will no longer have control over transfer payments"? The minister replied: "No, quite the contrary. We will have more control than ever before. We did not have controls in certain areas before, but now we will". All this remains to be defined.

Of course, the federal government will invite the provinces to come and negotiate with a loaded gun to their head: "If you do not want to lose even more federal support, then approve these standards". An internal document circulating among party ranks indicates that this is just the beginning. Other financial objectives will be set.

After these initial cuts of \$7 billion to transfer payments, which will primarily affect Quebec, the process will continue since we must solve the federal government's financial problems. This, without any consideration for the problems which will result from this process, particularly for some provinces, including problems related to their credit rating and to the