

*Supply*

questions must be put to the Chair in order to keep the discussion within parliamentary rules.

[English]

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to direct my remarks to such a distinguished resident of the central office of the House.

First let me apologize to the hon. member if I misinterpreted his earlier comments about the Constitution. His clarification is certainly reasonable. It will fully restore my respect for his constitutional knowledge and judgment.

Let me get to the central point which is the question the hon. member raised. The reality is that we have clearly said that all choices and decisions about the nature of education and training will be made by provincial governments. We are withdrawing from the course purchases which have been the standard pattern over the past few years where federal bureaucrats would sit down with their counterparts and decide which courses would be available to clients. It will be purely a provincial choice.

We are withdrawing from apprenticeship training, co-op education and a number of other measures because we believe that the fundamental questions of curriculum, supply, institutions, course, faculty, all the things that make up the basic training and education are provincial choices, purely within their jurisdiction.

We are also prepared to go one step further and say there are other programs, not training, but which are directly related to employment and if a provincial government is able, wants to, is prepared to and has the mechanisms to decide how to make them available, that is fine. All I have to make sure is the person who is the insuree, who puts the money into the pot, is able to get the benefit back. That is the test and a requirement under the act, under the Constitution as the trustee for that insurance program.

The design, system of delivery and the nature of how training takes places are clearly and simply provincial responsibilities. It is important to recognize it cannot take place through a simple block transfer. As we have learned in the past, a block transfer with provinces does not end up in the programs it is intended for.

Quebec has been one of the better provinces in ensuring transfers for education and health end up in those programs. There are a lot of provinces in which a lot of roads have been built with money that was supposed to go to universities and a lot of provincial public buildings built with money supposed to go into the health care system.

As a result we have to ensure that when my colleague pays into the program she has a right to expect a benefit in return. That is all. We are saying we are substantially simplifying those benefits. We are basically saying that the 39 programs my

department would run are being taken down to five measures. Those are not even programs, they are simply a tool. The provinces will be able to design that tool.

I use the example of the SPRINT program in Quebec which I think is a good program, a system to get people back to work. If Quebec is prepared to make that available to clients in the employment insurance program, let us do it and get them back to work. Those are the kinds of discussion I want to have.

I can assure the hon. member that we will discuss in good faith. We have invited the provincial ministers to meet with us and I am looking forward to that because I think there is a chance for a new, fresh, innovative dialogue with the provinces on this very crucial issue.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the experience the minister displays in his career in politics is very obvious. He is a very good speaker and I compliment him on that. I am sure he would do very well selling air conditioning units at the north pole.

• (1120)

As I listened to him there were several glaring contradictions. I have a series of questions related to these. He makes the same mistake as the Bloc when he appeals to history for what he is doing. Back in 1941 the government was given permission to run an unemployment insurance program. It is no longer a true insurance program.

My question is a very obvious one. Why does he appeal to this mandate back in 1941 to support what he is presently doing, making this a grand federal scheme that does not include only insurance? Why does he not return this to a true insurance program and only that?

Is there a long range plan behind all this? It is obvious this is simply tinkering. Is there some direction? Are we going to go beyond this?

The minister's press releases said a five-cent reduction in the premiums will create 20,000 jobs approximately. If that is true, 20,000 jobs with the unemployment we have is a drop in the bucket. If we can create jobs by tinkering with it only five cents, what is stopping the minister from reducing the premiums even more and creating more jobs? That is a very obvious question and a contradiction as far as I am concerned in what the minister is saying. If he wants to really create jobs why is he not doing more?

There is doublespeak. He says we are putting money in the hands of the individuals for empowerment. Why is he taking it out in the first place? The federal government charges a big handling fee whenever it takes money and does whatever it wants with it. Bureaucrats do not work for free.