

Government Orders

ment authorities in the area of social and labour programs are highly desirable. That is certainly the way to go.

If we really want to pursue this discussion in a positive manner, it is important that we adopt this bill now and start working towards establishing new and improved partnerships with one another.

While some members are worrying about the federal government taking powers away from the provinces, the Department of Human Resources Development is doing its job with Quebecers and, of course, with the Quebec government. Using jurisdictional considerations as an excuse, members of the Bloc want us to do nothing. Let us say this: in the name of the progress and of the changes that are obviously wanted in Quebec, let us find better ways of doing our job.

• (1245)

Canadians, as well as Quebecers, are well aware that the federal government has a legitimate role to play in development and manpower. So let us get things straight.

We had a case, the other day, that showed the urgent need for federal involvement, through its agencies, its community development organizations, which play an active role in every regional county municipality and through the Federal Office of Regional Development, which is always there to give a welcome and desirable helping hand to stimulate small businesses in Quebec. There are other examples, such as the Federal Business Development Bank. When there is a need for a partner to set up a small business in Quebec, especially in remote areas, this additional financial help from the federal government is always welcome.

I would like to talk about a particular case that occurred in my riding a few weeks ago. Throughout the referendum campaign in the riding of Bonaventure, the minister of agriculture, who happens to be my provincial MNA in Quebec City, asked for the participation of the federal government in order to stimulate, or create, if you will, a dairy industry in the Gaspé Peninsula. Following pressure from this minister, it was agreed that the federal government would invest in the establishment of a cheese-making operation in the region. Now, the day after the referendum, that very same minister who had challenged us to invest reneged. He decided, on the basis of provincial programs and on the advice of his provincial bureaucrats, that the agreement was no longer valid. I find this most unfortunate, but fortunately the federal government remains present even if the Government of Quebec went back on its commitment to develop an important industry in Quebec, and especially in my region, which is said to be a depressed area.

The federal government is also committed to helping people who are victims of particular circumstances that do not apply only to one province. This is the case of senior workers whose jobs are being jeopardized by the restructuring of the economy.

It is also the case of some workers in fisheries. We have all heard about TAGS. In Quebec \$100 million was spent to support those who were hard hit by the moratorium. There are still considerable investments being made to find new markets for underdeveloped species. As we know, however, fortunately it is the federal government that manages fisheries in the Gulf and elsewhere, but once the catch gets to the docks it is the responsibility of the province from then on. It is then up to Quebec to issue fish processing plant operating permits. Unfortunately Quebec is still refusing to invest the amounts necessary to give our local entrepreneurs a chance to diversify production, particularly of underdeveloped species such as mackerel and herring.

There are lots of similar examples in Quebec, unfortunately demonstrating Quebec's intransigence and the fact that it is not necessarily attuned to the true needs of the population. When I heard the opposition saying "All we want is decentralization, all we want is for Quebec to make a final decision", were they referring only to the SQDM? Mention has never been made of the fact that there are people who are what the Bloc would probably call "Quebecers of the majority", old-stock Quebecers, working for the federal public service, who come from the Magdalen Islands, Bonaventure of course, or elsewhere in Quebec, and that these people are seeking, not only as federal employees, but as concerned individuals, to provide the public with proper services.

• (1250)

And in all the speeches I have heard this morning, not a single member of the Bloc, not a single member of the opposition, came forward with a good idea. The only thing that was said is that everything happening in Quebec at this time is the federal government's fault. What I find regrettable, however, is that no one is listening to the voice of the people. There is already talk of a third referendum in Quebec. Mr. Speaker, let me state here to you, here before my constituents, before eastern Quebec, before all Quebecers, that the winning side this past October 30 was the no side.

I believe that what will be expected of the outgoing Leader of the Opposition, when he is premier of Quebec as he surely will be—and let me, in passing, wish him luck—is a commitment. He must make a commitment. In fact, he did, and people in the PQ government have announced they are prepared to work together with the Canadian government. I think Quebecers are fed up with constitutional discussions that fail to provide any answers. We want to put Quebecers back to work, and this will happen within the Canadian federation.

Throughout the referendum campaign, we made it clear that if Quebec left Canada it would lose several billion dollars worth of federal investment. Losses would be considerable and would be felt by everyone, but especially by the most vulnerable people in the province of Quebec. I think we have reached a point in our history where we should look at what we have in common,