

Supply

Contrary to what the hon. member opposite suggests, the act to implement the Internal Trade Agreement is not designed to take powers away from Quebec or any other province, but to ensure that we all grow stronger.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will make a few comments before putting my question. First, I want to point out the contradiction in the hon. member's last comment. He claims that sovereigntists are self-centered, but it is the federalists who say that, if we do achieve sovereignty, they will not enter into an economic union with Quebec.

So, which side is self-centered? It is the Canadian side, and I do not mean the people, but those who are mandated to represent them and do not do so properly in this case. They are the ones who say that they will refuse to participate in an economic union with Quebec. They are the ones who are self-centered, not us.

As for us, we are saying just the opposite: we welcome the idea of a partnership. After all, it would be consistent with today's trend. It is possible to want to control things and have as much power as possible as a nation and still be open to the idea of economic partnerships with others.

It is the hon. member who is inward-looking and self-centered. He is new here but, over time, he will come to recognize all the examples of duplication which exist.

• (1310)

The member referred to the Canada social transfer. I participated in a talk show at a Montreal radio station, CJAD, with the Minister of Human Resources Development, who addressed people who were panicking at the idea that the federal government would no longer have control. Interest groups in Canada are indeed concerned when they realize that the federal government will have less control over social programs. They are worried when they see the rise of the right wing in western Canada, and I can certainly understand their concern. They are worried about this whole issue.

The Minister of Human Resources Development told these people, and you can listen to the tapes: "Quite the contrary! We will now have more control than before". I would appreciate it if the two of them could get together and try to reconcile their views, given that the member just referred to an extraordinary flexibility.

He also mentioned the Federal Office of Regional Development, now a federal structure with no money and no means to act, but which gets involved in many issues. The member says: "Now, this is a good illustration of the future in regional development". I say that there is still a lot of room for improvement.

Let us now look at the issue of manpower, to which the member briefly alluded, and also the co-operation agreements in his region. In his speech, the hon. member said that we would discuss, examine and consider the issue, and that is exactly what

is being done. But while governments are discussing, the unemployed and welfare recipients are not working. While he says: "It is all right, federal and provincial officers are working together, trying to harmonize things and reduce overlap", nothing is being done, because of all the tension between the two levels of government which are always eager to pass the buck back and forth.

When only one level of government will be dealing with this issue, things will be clearer for the citizens who will have a more direct influence. The time will have come to stop talking about it and to take action, and I can hardly wait. My question is related to all of this. At first, the Minister of Human Resources Development said that he would reduce transfer payments for post-secondary education. Given the reaction of students, the government decided to hide its agenda first by lumping up the programs and then by making its cuts so that no one would know which program was hit the hardest.

Having said that, let me add that the Quebec National Assembly unanimously passed a motion put forward by the Action démocratique, with the support of the Liberal Party of Quebec, the close federalist friends of the members opposite, which said that Quebec should get more tax points instead. They all agreed on that.

Since the hon. member believes that the system is flexible, I would like him to tell us why his government does not want to give this area of jurisdiction to the province of Quebec and if he supports the resolution passed by the National Assembly of Quebec, which is asking for more tax points instead of cuts to cash transfers. I would like to find out the position of the hon. member on this issue.

Mr. Paradis: Madam Speaker, my first comment would be to say that Canada is a country that works. Maybe that is why our colleagues in the Bloc Québécois do not know which way to turn. Canada is a working proposition. A moment ago, they were talking about dismantling something that works just fine in order to set up a new partnership. That is exactly the word used by colleague from the Bloc.

If we are to have a partnership, mutual respect is a prerequisite. Hurling insults at people or at a system will lead us nowhere. Canada already has a structure to accommodate co-operation and partnership between the provinces and the federal government. Scores of agreements have been signed by both levels of government. That structure has been designed to let Canada as a whole and the provinces, reach for a better future.

My second point concerns the Canada social transfer, which demonstrates the flexibility of federalism.

[English]

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to enter into this debate on the motion by my hon. colleague in the Bloc Québécois.