

Government Orders

[Translation]

I would like to see the government take a look at the administration of its programs, so that these are better managed and, more importantly, better co-ordinated, to meet the needs of Canadians.

I will conclude by saying that I do not agree with those who claim that we are spending more and more on social programs.

I just received today a document entitled "The National Finances", published by the Canadian Tax Foundation. According to this document, social programs subsidized by the federal government represented 23.1 per cent of the tax base in 1984, compared to only 22.8 per cent in 1993-1994. We must not forget that. We must not claim that we are proportionally spending more and more all the time.

Mr. Benoît Tremblay (Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his speech. I noticed that he too had found in the present system many faults that make it absolutely absurd from the recipients' point of view. So, how do you expect the public to understand what the hon. member was talking about?

Here is my question: Is the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell aware that he is no longer in the opposition, that he is a government member and that his government could act now rather than spend another nine months consulting?

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, if I understood correctly, the hon. member is suggesting that we should not have consulted him, as the duly elected representative of his riding, and the other duly elected members of this House, that the government should have acted in an arbitrary manner, without consulting Parliament. This may be a Bloc Québécois pattern of thinking but we, Liberals, have more respect than that for this place than the Bloc has demonstrated. I might add, regarding the member who has asked me the question in particular, that I know his own political background much better than the previous Conservative government?

Basically, what we want to do is to hear from the duly elected representatives of the people to ensure that our programs will meet the needs of Canadians. After all, that is what we were sent here for.

The Deputy Speaker: I had planned to recognize the hon. member for Jonquière next, but since his comment was of a rather personal nature, in my opinion, I will give the floor back to the hon. member for Rosemont.

Mr. Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to add that, were the minister and his government to decide to act immediately to remedy those faults, they would have my support and I think that all my constituents would agree with me entirely.

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague on his presentation. As a high school guidance counsellor, I was for many years in a position to meet workers who wanted to receive some occupational training and who had to wrestle with unemployment insurance rules. And I would have liked to say exactly what my hon. colleague said, that is denounce the fact that some people today are not receiving training because Canadian training policies are inadequate.

• (1700)

In addition to congratulating my colleague, I would like to ask him a question. Why must all of these programs be standardized across Canada? Why could the Government of Quebec not oversee occupational training, as labour unions and management are demanding? In fact, Quebec stakeholders are unanimous in calling for all of these programs to be administered by the Quebec government. Why is this not possible at the present time?

Mr. Boudria: First of all, Mr. Speaker, it is not only the case with Unemployment Insurance. My colleague opposite should know, if he worked in that field, that welfare recipients are confronted with the same kind of problems. So, it does not happen only with federal programs. In fact, as we speak, the problems facing welfare recipients may well be worse.

Now, the member opposite is asking me: would it not be possible for certain programs to be administered by a single level of government instead of two? It is certainly not impossible, and no one said it was. As a matter of fact, if I am not mistaken, the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs stated clearly that he was planning and had in fact started negotiations along that line. So, it is far from impossible to negotiate successfully with provincial officials and it is not fair to say that the programs are the same—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The time allotted for questions and comments period has run out.

[English]

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak on the subject of reform of our social programs.

I have had the great privilege over many years in my community as a volunteer, as an elected representative municipally and as an elected representative federally to work with people in my community to try to resolve some of these problems and to agonize with them about the frustration of programs, rules and regulations that do not allow people to take the steps they want to take to become self-sufficient and to create a better life for themselves and their children.