

*Supply*

ment, municipal, provincial and federal, is aimed at setting in motion incredibly vast projects that have direct repercussions on the people and that serve the interests of the people.

Some will say that that is not all good and there is no decentralization of powers within the federation. Let us look at another example, the Communications Québec agreement, which allows the use of Communications Québec displays to advertise products available from various federal departments. This agreement exists, it has been signed, it works well and its ultimate goal is efficiency. We still have a window on the street but we can save some money.

Some will say that it is not good enough. That they are not impressed. They will say, to try and mislead Quebecers, that the system does not work despite all this.

• (1525)

There are many more examples. Let us take the Canada social transfer. This is a remarkable example where the official opposition has simply done an about-turn.

Members will remember that, before the budget was tabled, we were told that all programs were centralized in Ottawa, that Ottawa was controlling funds for post-secondary education, health and social programs and that there should be a global social transfer. That is what we were told before the budget.

Now to Mr. Martin's budget. We are giving the Canadian public—not just Quebec, but all of the provinces because they all requested it—the Canada social transfer, as a means of making the federation progress, as a means of showing that the system is flexible, as a means of bringing the management of funds closer to the people and of ensuring that decisions regarding spending will be more sensitive to the needs of the people.

Now that the Canada social transfer exists, now that it is reality, we are being told that that is not good, that the Minister of Human Resources Development will try to set national standards unilaterally. Just another example of the inability of the people across the way to rise above partisan interests and to seriously look at what the finance minister's budget really offers to Quebecers and Canadians.

In fact, the Canada social transfer is a Canadian decentralization model. As part of this initiative, the Minister of Human Resources Development has invited all provinces to participate in discussions with the federal government regarding national standards which will apply coast to coast.

Obviously, this bothers Bloc members. This bothers them because, if this continues, obviously the people of Quebec are

going to realize, and they already do realize, that the Canadian federation is working well. This bothers them because if it works too well, like it is now, their pipedream of separating is simply going to vanish into thin air.

There has been much talk about national standards. As you know, the people across the way decry national standards. I worked on the social program reform committee, and I must say that nobody in Canada, even Quebecers, is against national standards. However, what people are against is the federal government unilaterally setting those national standards.

Times have changed. The federal government has said repeatedly: "We want a flexible system. We want to work together with all the provinces and, because we are a country, to develop national standards that will respect the identities, wishes and needs of the provinces from coast to coast".

Another example of decentralization is the Human Resources Investment Fund that will come into force in April 1996. It is a good example of how we respect the wishes and the will of the people. There was a reference to manpower issues and to the need for decentralizing manpower services. There are two schools of thought. There is the position taken by the Parti Quebecois in Quebec City and the position taken by the public, which is the one we have chosen.

The Parti Quebecois takes the position that everything related to manpower development and manpower training should be theirs alone because they are the experts and know best what is needed. On the other side we have the public that wants to see a partnership between various levels of government that will have access to flexible funding, as opposed to rigid programs, funding that organizations at the local level will be able to manage according to genuine need.

I need hardly add that the course of action chosen by this government is clearcut, straightforward and non-partisan.

• (1530)

I am happy to say that this is the route the people wanted us to take. This is what the human resources investment fund is about. It will ensure that local agencies will be able to manage very flexible funds according to the real needs of the community.

There is another thing. Those opposite criticize us from time to time for intervening in regional economic development. We intervene, because people ask us to. People ask us to intervene as the federal government and also as a partner.

Am I to understand that what members opposite want is for the federal government to withdraw essentially from its regional development function? Does this mean that all the money invested in people to strengthen our economic fibre should be