

Government Orders

• (1230)

In 1994-95, \$531 million was spent for this purpose. The federal department now offers 27 initiatives or programs, most of which create duplication with the 22 programs offered by the SQDM and others offered by various departments.

In 1994, the federal government announced the creation of Youth Service, at a cost of \$175 million. This program is entirely comparable to the Volunteer Youth Action Program, which is efficiently run by the SQDM. In spite of repeated demands by the Quebec government, the federal government keeps refusing to transfer funds into the provincial program, thus wasting money because of duplication.

Another equally pathetic example is the federal program that matches another similar Quebec program called Jeunes stagiaires. The 50 Canadian sectorial skills council, set up in 1992, are another case of duplication, considering the 15 Quebec manpower sector committees which have been in place for more than five years. The federal government will spend more than \$250 million to set up its own councils. Finally, because of the rigid standards for POWA, the federal government has failed to compensate many garment sector workers.

In view of the difficulties some workers were experiencing, the Quebec government, through the SQDM, had to step in to make up for the federal government's shortcomings. Here again, we have duplication. What a waste of money and time. The cost of all this duplication is estimated at \$250 million a year. That is poor management and poor efficiency.

In conclusion, I would say that federal intrusion in the area of human resources development since 1942 is one more example of the government's abuse of the spending power and of its disregard for the exclusive jurisdictions of the Quebec government. Constitutionally, the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction over manpower training, but, to this day, the stubbornness of the federal government still undermines the development of the Quebec economy.

Vocational training is the cornerstone of competitiveness and availability of highly skilled workers, two assets that are essential if we are to develop a high technology economy, attract many investors and produce value added goods.

The minister and his government should stop all this nonsense and give back to Quebecers all the tools they need to develop manpower training. Bill C-96 should therefore be withdrawn, and the Prime Minister should start to deliver on his decentralization promises in areas where a strong consensus exists in Quebec.

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not long ago, I read the speech the Minister of Human Resources Development made during second reading of Bill C-96. This bill, entitled an Act to establish the Department of Human Resources Development and to amend and repeal certain related Acts, certainly stems from a noble intent.

In reading this speech, I felt a significant change had been made to the usually model and edifying Liberal speech dished out to us to get us to swallow the pill. The minister said, and I quote: "a new, innovative way of doing government, to get people to begin to think differently about how government can relate to individuals, to provide a much more effective way of enabling people to respond and make choices themselves and not have choices made for them, to share, to create partnerships, to get away from the top down command system and to turn that into a Canadian Tire philosophy based in the local communities with tools and instruments customized and tailored to the needs of those communities".

One could think that the minister is talking about real decentralization and is about to comply once and for all with the repeated and urgent requests of the province of Quebec for control over the policies and programs concerning manpower and training.

• (1235)

However, the minister warned us right from the start. "It is, he said, decentralization of a very different kind".

The minister then said: "There has been a lot of talk about decentralization. So far it has been a somewhat restricted debate as it talks only about decentralization in terms of transferring from the federal government to provincial governments." And this is very significant. The message here is clear. The kind of decentralization the minister is bragging about has nothing to do with Quebec's expectations and ignores the consensus that was reached in Quebec over manpower training.

Let us look at this a little bit closer. Even though the prime minister told us, in answer to our questions, that the official opposition had obviously not bothered to read Bill C-96, we have to conclude that several individuals, institutions and organizations in Quebec are really ignorant, according to the prime minister. Unfortunately for him, the people of Quebec also know how to read between the lines.

It is appalling but not really surprising to see that Bill C-96 goes totally against the large consensus reached in Quebec over manpower issues. For several years now, all those involved in Quebec's labour force have agreed to demand the repatriation to Quebec of all manpower training programs and of the related budgets.

Far from abiding by this unanimous consent, the federal government has announced its intent to continue with and even increase all of the costly duplication and overlap. Once again, the Liberal government ignores its own basic rule. Yet, the Canadian Constitution of 1867 recognizes clearly and explicitly the areas of provincial jurisdiction. But for years now the federal government has been using its spending power and its authority to impose national standards and to infringe upon the jurisdictions of the provinces. All that Bill C-96 does is legalize a de facto situation.