

Government Orders

work of a fair, compassionate and proud nation. Bill C-21 is part of it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Jonquière): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-21, having been on the legislative committee that travelled across the country to hear witnesses who had something to contribute on the legislation. The hon. member opposite also was part of our group.

Mr. Speaker, during those three weeks we travelled across Canada and the other week where we heard witnesses here in Ottawa, we heard varying comments depending on group representatives who appeared before us.

On labour's side, many opposed the Bill. They welcomed the Government proposals that suited them, and wished they would be included in the legislation, with the money coming from somewhere else, and hoped that anything that did not suit them would be left out.

These proposals, or the trust of the legislation revolve around two things: First, re-allocating \$600 million of funds to new benefits, including for instance maternity, parental and sickness benefits, and second, taking \$800 million, also from the unemployment insurance fund, and re-allocate them to training. But what unions wanted initially was not training, they did not even want us to get involved with that, but gradually they realized this made sense indeed. But then they told us: Yes, we agree on training, but the \$800 million you will take them from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. You realize, Mr. Speaker, that for the Government matters are not so simple. Taxpayers are fed up with constantly increasing taxes.

It is this Government's responsibility and our common responsibility to try and do more with what we have. The Federal Government now runs nearly 1,000 different programs across Canada. If each time we want to do something new we have to take additional money from the taxpayers' pockets, we end up with a monster that breeds deficits that can no longer be controlled.

This is the new direction and the challenge we face as Canadians and as a Government in this country trying to use available funds, re-allocating them so that they are more effective. This is what the Government is doing with the \$800 million allocated to training. We take those moneys from the unemployment insurance fund, roughly \$1,4 billion, and re-allocate them to more productive purposes. This is exactly what happens with those \$600 million for new social benefits and \$800 million for training.

Why are we putting \$800 million into training? Mr. Speaker, why do we as a Government decide to use \$800 million for training workers? Why do we not leave that to educational institutions?

• (1640)

For two main reasons, Mr. Speaker. By education, we mean full-time studies at high school, college or university level, which comes under provincial jurisdiction. But when someone drops out of school to get a job and becomes unemployed a few years later, we then talk about workers' training. There is a casual relationship between the two. You could pay people to stay home and do nothing when they would rather work. Or you could use those funds to help train them so that they can go back to work in the near future. It would be a lot more satisfying for the people involved.

This is an astonishing member, Mr. Speaker but 30 per cent of our young people are dropping out of high school. Obviously, if you leave school before completing grade 11 or 12 and get a job without training, what will happen to you eventually? You will lose your job and become unemployed. Recently, 50 per cent of the people polled by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said it was difficult to find skilled workers. So you can see the link between the high school drop-out rate and the skilled labour shortage. We as a government must do something. We cannot allow this situation to continue. So what are we going to do with the \$800 million? Training programs will be implemented so that those young people can take courses for up to 106 weeks. They will be paid to attend school, and that is something they need. I think it is an excellent initiative. This is a major change of attitude on the part of the government and, under present circumstances, no one would dare argue against this basic principle.