

Government Orders

that this injustice would be corrected by not eliminating what little our province had got in the first place.

Again, when confronted with figures quoted by the hon. member for Saint-Jean, the Minister of National Defence said that indeed Quebec's percentage of the defence budget was smaller. The minister also said that he appreciated the hon. member's arguments to the effect that Quebec is at a disadvantage, but added that it was because of its geographical location in Canada. How can the minister and his government confirm that Quebec is at a disadvantage and ask us to put up with yet more cuts, when we have already suffered a prejudice for more than 20 years? If our location put us at a disadvantage during the Second World War, how can it once again put us at a disadvantage today?

Moreover, it is misleading to say that 22 per cent of military spending is now made in Quebec. Again, the Minister of National Defence pointed out that after the budget under study the percentage of military expenditures in Quebec has in fact increased, because of major cuts in the rest of the country. That share, which was 19 per cent yesterday, is now 22 per cent, this in spite of the closing of the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean and the downsizing of the military base.

Indeed, how can the minister say that when the figure of 22 per cent is only an estimate for 1997? To imply that this is the estimate for the present is to stretch things quite a bit. The same goes for the statements made concerning the Royal Military College in Kingston, and that concerns me.

I also want to say something about the comments made by the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence who said that if the government had listened to the Bloc Québécois and cut 25 per cent of the defence budget, it would have been necessary to make even greater cuts in Quebec. In fact, if the government had made such a cut without affecting Quebec it would only have brought the expenditures made in our province in line with the per capita average spending for the rest of Canada. It would also have provided an argument for the few federalists still waiting for a justification of the Canadian federalism.

Not only was the Liberal government quite prepared to make cuts in Quebec, but it also showed its arrogance and its unfairness by closing the military college which is the least costly to run. It decided to close the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean in spite of the departmental report which I quoted earlier and which recommends that all three military colleges remain open and that operations be streamlined.

In my opinion, the recommendation made by the departmental committee is certainly a good one, considering that the closure of Royal Roads and the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean will only translate into savings of \$34 million. By comparison, the hon. member for Waterloo, who is one of the minister's colleagues, mentioned that if we put restrictions to the relocation of military personnel moving from one base to another, which cost \$118 million last year, we would easily save \$35 million.

I am not done but unfortunately my time is up.

● (1525)

Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, in light of the budget tabled two weeks ago and the additional information provided by the Minister of Finance since, it would seem that the Liberal government has taken no serious action to prevent duplication between certain federal departments as well as between levels of government or to check squandering in the public administration. We know full well that year after year the Auditor General unearths outrageous cases of waste.

Of course, the Minister of Finance says he is reducing the operating budgets of the federal bureaucracy, but that is not enough if we are to stop living above our means. The government cannot expect, with the kind of expenditure level it is forecasting, to lower the individual tax rate in the medium term, a move which would really contribute to restore the confidence of Quebecers and Canadians in the economy.

Basically, the government is not addressing the chronic government deficit problem when it fails to rationalize its spending. Moreover, it is relying on a very slight economic recovery to reduce the deficit. With the underground economy constantly gaining ground and given, among other things, our level of taxation, there is no way that government revenue can increase faster than the sum total of revenues generated by economic activity, the GDP. In fact, the government is only moving funds around from one budget item to another without reducing expenditures as a whole.

As for the unemployment insurance reform, it reflects the contempt of Liberals for the jobless. Minister Axworthy admits to be pursuing the following objective, namely to force recipients to work longer to continue to qualify for the same number of weeks of benefits. As if people chose to be unemployed and to work only a given number of weeks. This program is intended to provide income support to workers and must not be seen as a way of life in combination with work.

This reform without any job creation incentive results in pushing the unemployed toward welfare, thus passing the buck to the provinces. The young will bear the brunt of this reform as they are the ones having a hard time finding long-term jobs.

The problem with unemployment in Canada and Quebec is the lack of available jobs and increasing numbers of temporary jobs. The government must promote work and make it accessible to all.

The infrastructure program will do nothing to address job insecurity as only temporary employment will be created with the billions sunk into it.

With regard to the implementation of this program, many rural municipalities in Quebec feel left out because they have done infrastructure work in the past two years. Take for example the municipality of Saint-Maurice, with a population of 2,195. In 1991-92, this municipality spent \$413,000, or \$95 per person, on non-subsidized infrastructure work. The standard for work not covered by the new program is as follows: the cost of work done over the past two years, divided by the total popula-