

The Budget—Mr. Rocheleau

Mr. Speaker, is there any indication that free trade has done anything for Canada except cutting employment? No Mr. Speaker.

About unemployment insurance. We have every reason to talk about it, because the Government just made major cuts in this important program, after signing the Free Trade Agreement without making any provisions for an adjustment program or for retraining. Today, the Government transfers the funding of the Unemployment Insurance Program to employers and employees.

A cut in Government spending worth \$2.9 billion means the same amount in additional expenditures for Canadian citizens and for Canadian companies.

And what about old age security pensions? Last week, we were told that old age security pensions for rich people would have to be cut. Mr. Speaker, I think you will agree that old age security was a universal program that applied to all Canadians, whatever their income or lack of it. And when a Government like this one starts cutting old age security at the top, next year or the year after we can expect the Government to lower the ceiling, and finally, we will have old age security pensions as a substitute for welfare, payable only to people living at the poverty line.

Mr. Speaker, we could also talk about a program in Québec which the Government was expected to support, and I am referring to day care. In July 1988, a few months before the election, the Minister of Health announced that \$1 billion or a thousand million more would be earmarked for day care. We are told the Budget provides for a \$4 billion cut in funding. Is this Government conservative or progressive? Is this a Government that helps Canadian families? No, Mr. Speaker, it is not.

Yesterday Premier Bourassa was just across the river in the Ottawa Valley, in Hull to be exact, criticizing the federal government for forcing Québec and the other provinces to make up for its budget cuts in the field of education.

All these cuts, Mr. Speaker, let alone the tax increases— And what about the latest scheme of this government, the value-added tax, or as my colleague called it a while ago, the added sales tax, which was to be negotiated between the provinces and the federal government. The Conservative government promised before the election not to impose another sales tax on Canadians without reaching an agreement with the provinces so as to avoid taking up a tax field which is presently theirs.

Mr. Speaker, it is shameful and ludicrous for the government to present such a budget to Canadians. I personally deplore the fact that, just before the election, the government fooled and betrayed the Canadian people by saying everything was going well while, today, we get just about the worst budget Canada has had in a long time.

• (1640)

Mr. Speaker, how can we cope with free trade with the Americans when our interest rates are 3 percentage points higher than theirs. How can we hope to reduce inflation? What can we do when the government itself and the minister of Finance control the Bank of Canada which is responsible for these high interest rates? How can we believe in the intellectual honesty of this government when we have a deficit of 29 billion dollars this year which, according to the budget, will increase to 30.5 billion next year? Is that good management? When the government came to power in 1984, the national debt reached 177 billion and today, in 1989, it is 330 billion. Is that good management? We are plunging into debt generations and generations to come and that is what is absurd in the budget presented by the Conservative government.

But there is another point even more important to be made, Mr. Speaker, a point which particularly affects the National Capital Region. And I want to try and explain to the House the frustration shared not only on the Quebec side of the Ottawa Valley but also in Ontario, throughout the National Capital Region and by all Canadians, over the awarding of federal contracts.

We all know, Mr. Speaker, how important it is for a Government to maintain its integrity and openness. Probity is the most sacred attribute a government can have, and God knows what the present Government has put us through during the last four years.

Mr. Speaker, last December, Transport Canada and the federal Government were calling for tenders. Twenty-one tenders were sent to Public Works. Five were selected, Mr. Speaker, because they met the criteria specified by Public Works. We followed the whole debate, Mr. Speaker, because we thought the government was showing us its openness. But nowadays, we see how things have changed, especially when we read in the Budget introduced by the Minister of Finance, on page 26, a completely false statement which I will now read to you, Mr. Speaker. It says that the total capital cost of this Transport Canada Building is estimated to be in the order of \$200 million, that the call for tenders for this