

*Supply*

an enormous difference in the debt position of the country.

Incomes for individuals are off. People are not earning and that means they are not spending and paying goods and services tax for example. The problem is that payments are being made to support a social net structure to keep people going at the same as there is a great reduction in income.

I do not think it is going to get that much easier. We are going to have to do some really hard thinking to break the cycle of debt.

• (1550)

**Mr. Andre:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to designate tomorrow as an allotted day.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to participate in this debate today. Perhaps I should just remind members and those who may be paying attention via the television about the motion that we are debating today. It is an opposition day motion and it says:

That this House is of the opinion that the Budget is, as put by the Chief Government Whip, "a disgrace".

I think it is a good thing that such a motion was found to be in order because it permits us to debate the budget and also to call attention to the fact that there seems to be a division of opinion on the other side as to the merit of the budget which just goes to show that these things happen. It just goes to show that there is a variety of opinion in all caucuses on a great many things.

I think it is interesting that the government Whip said this but I do not want to dwell too much on that. I think what happened with this budget is that we basically had a budget so that the government could not be accused of not having a budget. That was basically the only purpose that the budget served. Had it not brought in a budget because it did not want to saddle a new Prime Minister and a new leader of the Conservative Party with a real budget, it would have been open to criticism for leaving the country budgetless. It brought in something and called it a budget. By doing so it deflected any criticism that might have originated in that vein.

I do not think that they have been able to avoid legitimate criticism because in spite of the fact that it was

not much of a budget there were measures in there that are nonetheless objectionable. There were other things that could have been in there and we objected to their absence.

I will start with some of the things that we find objectionable. It is something that I have spoken on in this House many times. It has to do with the continuing attack by this government on VIA Rail, which is the passenger rail service in this country. I believe the budget said that there would be a \$50 million cutback and then a \$100 million cutback per year thereafter.

What does this tell everybody who lives outside the Montreal-Windsor corridor? It tells them basically that passenger rail service anywhere outside that corridor, where there is a slim chance of making a profit, is expendable. It says that the rest of the country does not really count and that commitments made by this government—as a government and when the Conservatives were in opposition—over the years to the maintenance of a passenger rail service in this country have proven to be rather empty.

It is not as if this is the first thing it has ever done. I am sure we will recall the great evil that was done to VIA Rail in the announcements made in the fall of 1989 that took effect on January 15, 1990. I would remind the House that despite promises to the contrary and implications to the contrary that many people who lost service at that time, thanks to those cuts, still have not had their needs met.

I am thinking particularly of people in my riding who for many years were able to access their summer cottages by rail and are no longer able to do that in the way that they used to. We are now entering into the fourth or fifth summer and some of those people still cannot access their cottages because the promises that were made by various ministers of transport to enable, facilitate and to fund alternate modes of travel such as roads have still not come to pass.

• (1555)

I am not in favour of these alternate modes except in the absence of a return to the rail service. I would prefer that we saw the wisdom, not of constantly paring back passenger rail service, but of finding ways to use the train more and not less.