

*The Budget*

no provision for job creation. Let us look at a few examples to justify my remarks.

I represent the riding of Manicouagan. In this riding, social programs take on considerable importance because the rate of unemployment is higher than the national average and also because the distances between villages is a serious impediment to the region's economic development.

When I say the rate of unemployment is high, it is true. And when the minister once again with a vengeance went after the most disadvantaged, that is the unemployed, well, the people in our area were affected on February 27 by the tabling of this budget. Already, in a region like ours, where, east of Natashquan, 85 per cent of the population depends on fishing, the people had to work 12 weeks in 1994 instead of the previous 10, in order to qualify for unemployment insurance.

In my riding, and more particularly east of Natashquan, managing to have six weeks' work was quite an achievement, given that the department of fisheries, on the other hand, was cutting quotas in order to preserve stocks. I do not question the merits of this, but people were losing weeks of work on the sea so stocks could be preserved. When you try to relate these two, that is, preservation of stocks and therefore fewer weeks of fishing, on the one hand, and the need for more weeks of work to be eligible for unemployment insurance, on the other, things do not add up once again.

In his February 27 budget, the Minister of Finance found another way to go after the people of Manicouagan. Just like that, he said that he was going to cut their unemployment insurance cheques by 10 per cent. In a way, he makes no distinction between people who live in Manicouagan, Saint-Hubert, Laurier—Sainte-Marie or Charlevoix.

In addition, my region is affected by the \$300 million cuts to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The unemployment rate is very high, as I said, and, consequently, many people live in housing managed by the CMHC. For unemployed people, and for those who have gone a step further and receive social assistance, finding low-rental housing is of capital importance. With one stroke of the pen, the minister added another hardship to the lives of the needy who, like you and me, will always be in need of lodging.

• (1115)

There are vital needs that the government must not play with if it wants to maintain the standard of living, such as food and lodging. In one speech, the Minister of Finance went after both simultaneously.

By skimming 10 per cent from unemployment insurance cheques, he took away quality and a good part of the food. By cutting the CMHC's funding by \$300 million, he deprived many households, many families, often single-parent families, might I add, according to the statistics, of decent housing. Therefore,

how much respect can the government really have for the population if it is not even committed to keeping just the basic elements that make up society's standard of living? If that is not taking it out on the needy, I do not know what is.

People in my riding will also be affected by changes to the health care and education system, but naturally, in an indirect way. Indirect because the minister calls these indirect cuts "decentralization". Allow me to explain. The minister anticipates that transfer payments to the provinces will be cut by \$7 billion. Now, we all know that the provinces use that money to provide health care and education to their population. Yes, there is duplication, because the provinces are already administering these programs. But it is not decentralization, it is dumping the deficit in the provinces' backyards.

They are offloading the deficit because the provinces will get \$7 billion less but will still be expected to provide the same services. However, the federal government is careful not to withdraw completely from health care and education for the simple reason that it wants to standardize these areas and raise standards so that it will be a little more costly for the provinces to operate in these fields.

They cut their financial support every year but still manage to give just enough to impose standards that end up costing a lot of money. They cut financial support without giving the provinces any additional decision-making powers. The minister calls this "decentralization", but in truth it amounts to offloading their deficit onto the provinces.

When people get sick in my riding on the North Shore, where the roads are inadequate, they must be transported by plane. We must give financial help to some doctors so that they can travel to remote areas like the North Shore. One does not choose to get sick in Kuujuaq or Natashquan any more than in downtown Toronto.

There is also the gasoline tax. Again, the Minister of Finance did not discriminate, but that is not necessarily a good thing. Let us not forget that unemployed people looking for jobs hope that any dollar they put in their gas tanks will yield results. This measure will affect them indirectly once again. The budget does not say anything about job creation. The Liberal government got elected on its red book promises by shouting from the rooftops that they would create jobs.

In the first year of his mandate, the Minister of Finance and all the other Liberal members proclaimed to all and sundry that they would address the deficit by creating jobs. Yet, the February 27 budget showed us the true face of the Liberal Party, which does not do anything to create jobs. Instead, they went after the most needy while protecting their friends and being careful to keep up appearances and look good, which is important to the Liberal Party, of course. When I say that they are protecting their friends, I am referring among other things to family trusts.