

I want in the course of my speech to deal with some of the issues that the minister raised. Why has the government cut this \$2.7 million program, that in the minister's own words, the government's contribution was unprecedented and this was a most successful program. He said that it did its job. Well let us examine that. He said that the government cannot afford that. We will examine that as well.

Before I begin, I would like to quote to the minister from an article by Arthur Drache in *The Financial Post*, not a socialist newspaper. I leave this for the minister and for the former minister of finance, who is in the House, to listen to because it comes from a paper that normally supports his party. The article reads:

While I felt the budget presented by Finance Minister Don Mazankowski was as good as could have been expected, there are aspects which I find troubling. In particular, I'd like to voice dissent for the decision to eliminate the Economic Council of Canada, the Law Reform Commission, the Science Council of Canada and, most strenuously, the Court Challenges Program.

Removing these institutions from the Canadian landscape is a method of decreasing dissent and criticism of government policies. The net result will be that those who challenge policy have been deprived of quasi-official platforms and will be marginalized.

That is a serious charge. I say to the minister that he and the government have a serious problem on their hands. There is always one item, or maybe more, that stands out as being unreasonable.

How can the government say to the Canadian public that it has cut a successful program which a large number of prominent people, including a former judge of the Supreme Court of Canada says is absolutely needed, because it does not have enough money and then turns around and spends \$870,000 a year for daily press clippings for the Prime Minister. It just will not wash.

I would ask the minister, if I could, what percentage the \$2.7 million is in the budget of his department. I bet it is a pretty small percentage.

I happen to know, since I am justice critic for my party, the estimates of the Department of Justice and here they are: for professional and other services last year,

1991-92, \$74 million. That is for hiring lawyers to go up against people in the courts for the Department of Justice. Next year it is going up to \$89 million. The government could find \$15 million for the rich lawyers but it could not find \$2.7 million for the poor and the handicapped, the marginalized groups in this program. I say shame on the minister on this. This is a defeat for the minister. He should resign over this.

Look at what is happening to the judges in this country. How do you explain this to the people? The government has allowed the judges, who make \$147,000 a year, to get a cost of living increase of 5 per cent so they will go up to about \$155,000. At the same time, the government froze the salaries of the lower level civil servant. You take a woman, as a secretary and single parent, working in the—

Do not leave the House, Mr. Minister. Sit down and listen to the speech.

Mr. Weiner: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has no business saying I was about to leave the House. If I want to stretch my legs in the lobby this is an opportunity. I do not have to ask his permission to get up for one moment. But I take it as an insult that he would even think I would leave the House while he was giving some very constructive suggestions.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I would just repeat the old parliamentary rule that the presence or absence of a fellow member in this House should not be mentioned.

The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam again has the floor.

[English]

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, I thought the minister was leaving. I am not speaking for myself, this is not personal, this is speaking for a lot of people who want the minister to hear this.

Let's look at the program. As the minister said, it started in 1978 as a program to fund language cases and