

The Budget—Mr. Pelletier

additional speakers, namely, the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Pelletier) and the hon. member for Huron-Middlesex (Mr. McKinley). In the process, we would forgo the normal late show.

Mr. Paproski: Mr. Speaker, yes, there has been agreement in the House that we would allow time to speak to the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Pelletier) and also the hon. member for Huron-Middlesex (Mr. McKinley). We would hope to adjourn at 20 minutes to 12 a.m.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, there is a slight correction to the hon. member's statement. I am sure the hope would be that these speeches would each be of approximately 20 minutes' duration, and that will take us to about 25 to 11.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): The suggestion is before the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Agreed and so ordered.

Mr. Irénée Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, first of all I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. Crosby) on his maiden speech.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pelletier: Being a native maritimer from New Brunswick, I would also like to tell the hon. gentleman that I have studied at St. Francis Xavier University in his province. I subscribe completely to what he said about youth and about the maritime provinces, although I do not share his last few words concerning this government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the budget speech like the Speech from the Throne gives us a chance to discuss matters that we cannot deal with when legislation comes before this House since we are then restricted to the specific subject matter of the bill introduced in the House. I would like to avail myself of the few minutes I am allotted today to tell my colleagues about a problem which faces the Sherbrooke area, which I have the honour of representing here. I would like to deal with the controversial question of relocation, that is the federal government plan to relocate in Sherbrooke the mapping branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. This was announced a year ago and until now the negotiations have not led to any positive results. But before that, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say a few words on the textile situation in the Eastern Townships since this industry was and still is the most important of the area in terms of employment.

The situation of the textile industry has never been more encouraging in the last ten years that it is now. The action taken by the Canadian government in November, 1976, to redress an unbearable situation which had been denounced by union, labour and industry has yielded positive results. The government has agreed to implement the recommendations

[Mr. Martin.]

and proposals made by the Canadian Textile and Clothing Board as well as the corrective measures proposed by some members in the House, such as the hon. member for Drummond (Mr. Pinard), the hon. member for Gamelin (Mr. Portelance) and the hon. member for Compton (Mr. Tessier). The devaluation of the Canadian dollar has also contributed to the recovery of the textile industry. The Quebec government's sales tax cut on clothing was also instrumental in bringing about an improvement in this area. There are of course a few sectors in the textile industry which will need special attention over the next few months. These sectors are a little softer than others which we have improved to a large extent by implementing the measures we announced in November, 1976.

Last year, negotiations between Canada and seven of the major textile exporters have led to the signing of renegotiable five year agreements. All these developments have contributed to a large extent to the recovery of the textile industry. To put it in a nutshell, at the present time, the textile industry is in excellent shape in the eastern townships, the province of Quebec as a whole and Canada in general. We can say that the industry is expanding and it is important to mention it, Mr. Speaker, because the area I represent, in spite of commendable efforts at industrial reorganization, is still a region where soft sectors predominate, which makes the whole area of the Eastern Townships and more particularly Sherbrooke very sensitive to adverse economic conditions. This prompts me to deal with the problem of decentralization, that is the mapping branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

● (2202)

Five years ago, the federal government decided to decentralize some departments which could easily function outside the federal capital. In Quebec and this criticism has often originated with provincial members, organizations and even governments—the federal government has often been blamed for centralizing everything in the national capital, while some of the services could very well have been operated normally in other areas of the country. That is why the federal government has been led to consider the possibility of relocating several of its agencies or departments in the provinces. In this process, Sherbrooke was elected to receive a complete section of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, the mapping branch, and on October 3, 1977, the then solicitor general, the hon. Francis Fox, announced in a press conference that he was advising Sherbrooke of the official decision made by the Canadian government to decentralize that department, and relocate the mapping branch in the eastern townships.

In August 1974, the cabinet asked the Treasury Board to examine in detail the removal of public services and the decentralization of certain departments. The cabinet ministers thought that if it was well executed such a specific program could promote the federal policy of national unity, regional economic development, balanced urban growth and better services for Canadians.