

Government Orders

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, such an easy question from an easy representative. The hon. member's assertion is factually incorrect.

Mr. Hermanson: Make some sense for once.

Mr. Dingwall: I did not interrupt the hon. member when he was speaking. Maybe he can give me the same courtesy.

Let him remember and understand history. Yes, regional economic development programs have not been a raving success. To suggest there have been no successes is factually incorrect. It is factually incorrect to suggest that they have not benefited certain regions. The hon. member should travel the country extensively before he states false and misleading information of that nature.

The hon. member makes the statement that somehow we changed the programming of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency because of the interventions of the Reform Party. The people who changed that program from grants to loans were the business community and business representatives in Atlantic Canada. When I travel Atlantic Canada, which is extensively, I meet with them time and time again. I have listened to what they have said and listened to what the Atlantic Liberal caucus has said and that is the reason we moved from grants to repayable loans.

Finally, the hon. member made reference to a dinky on the coin.

• (1530)

Let me say to the hon. member that yes, the students at the University College of Cape Breton have referred to this wall that they have constructed under an infrastructure program as the "Dingwall".

I want to tell my hon. friend that just the other day I drove by the "Dingwall" in a car with white walls. I want to assure the hon. member that the "Dingwall" is a hell of a lot more effective and durable than the white walls on that car. I think the hon. member knows who I am referring to when I talk about the white walls.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Monday, before the Minister of Finance tabled his budget, I was worried because I realized Canada was bankrupt.

This was not my opinion but that of the *New York Wall Street Journal*, in an article that appeared on January 12, this year, under the heading "Bankrupt Canada". I also knew that Moody's in New York had put us under a credit watch and was waiting for the right moment to reduce our credit rating, which would put upward pressure on the deficit and the national debt.

Considering these facts, I knew the Minister of Finance would have to turn the situation around. I thought he would be fair to all taxpayers, however. I would have liked to discuss the main cuts introduced by the Minister of Finance, which are not, in every case, appropriate and transparent, but I am sure my colleagues will do a better job, since these subjects are not my specialty.

As the official opposition critic for transport, I was expecting cuts but I had no idea the Department of Transport was up for sale. I found that out last Monday.

As a result of program review, budgetary cuts will total \$1.1 billion or 50.8 per cent of total expenditures forecast from 1995 to 1998. If we include cuts announced in the previous budget, the Department of Transport's spending levels will be reduced by 1.4 billion during the same period. In fact, budgetary savings as a result of program review will total \$2.6 billion over three years.

Take, for instance, the transfer of airports to local authorities. The problem, since this is about downloading the deficit to the provinces, is that these transfers to local or provincial authorities will not include the corresponding tax points. That is the problem.

Air Canada was sold, and now Canadian National is on the block. Means of transportation that our ancestors put in place are now being sold off, not as a face saving gesture but to make the government's failure in this respect less palpable. What can we say about all this? Is this supposed to be a spring sale by the federal government? Is this a closing out sale or a panic sale?

Since the Bloc Québécois arrived in force in Ottawa, we have been in favour of big projects to jump start the economy and replenish the government coffers. In this regard, I spoke a number of times in this House to encourage the government to set up and invest in rapid transport, a high speed train in the Windsor—Quebec City corridor. The budget made no mention of this project. In fact, it indicated that there would be no more mega-projects.

From the start of the budget speech to the end of it, I watched the Department of Transport crumble. I watched the legacy of a century disintegrate. I kept waiting for the comforting announcement of a project that would get the economy moving—a high speed train. But no such luck.

Let us have a look at the coast guard now. We are presented with the integration of the Coast Guard into the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. At first glance, it would seem to be an interesting arrangement, because there is a promise of greater efficiency. But we must look carefully. Even though the budget contains no concrete measures, other than those affecting the fleet, the federal government plans to change the operations and level of service of the Coast Guard. These changes will take the form of cost recovery measures and increased fees.