

Oral Questions

promised: "A Liberal government will reduce grants to business". Once elected that very same Liberal government begins shovelling money over to its friends in business.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. How does he justify the full blast operation of what Terence Corcoran calls the Ottawa grant machine in defiance of the government's own red book?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member ought to be a bit more specific in terms of what grants she is opposing. I read Mr. Corcoran's column.

Is she opposing the infrastructure program? Is she opposing the program that every single province in the country has endorsed? Is she opposing the infrastructure program that every major municipality has requested?

An hon. member: Perhaps we should have recall.

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard): That is right, perhaps we should have recall, considering that every province and every municipality wants to have the infrastructure program. If she does not like it, maybe we should have recall.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, we would love a definition of what infrastructure is and if it includes Saddledomes and hockey stadiums, then we do have to ask questions.

I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Finance also on the topic of business as usual.

Two separate squadrons of members of Parliament and senators are lifting off for Paris in the springtime. One of those groups will be accompanied by spouses at taxpayers' expense.

Will the minister explain to his colleagues that compounding the wastefulness of an already useless junket makes his efforts to cut the deficit that much harder?

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to say that the trip does not involve the authority of the government. It is the executive of the parliamentary association that is elected by the members of this House.

• (1425)

It is important for us who believe that parliamentary exchange with the rest of the world is important. This is a national Parliament and such exchanges should continue.

Concerning the way delegations are formed and the expenses of such delegations, I would like to remind members that on January 17 this year we announced a plan to reduce costs to the House of Commons budget. In that plan was the way we should restructure our parliamentary association.

I am sure that if the member has enough patience in the few months to come before this session adjourns we will have a new system of parliamentary delegation. I am sure that the representative of the Reform Party on the board will contribute to that new approach.

The Speaker: I would point out to the hon. member that parliamentary trips or voyages, if I might call them that, come under the purview not of the government per se but from a committee of Parliament. With that I will go to the third question.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, those who travel with the parliamentary associations are not paying their own way. The taxpayers are paying their way.

One final supplementary question for the Minister of Finance, still on the theme of business as usual.

It is reported that a poll commissioned by the human resources department cost \$250,000. Would the Minister of Finance in his efforts to trim the deficit, as I know he is concerned, investigate whether this was the lowest bid the department of human resources received or whether the most competitive bid which was recommended by the department was passed over by the minister in favour of his hometown pollster?

The Speaker: We are bordering here on impugning motives. I am sure we would be able to lower the decibel level just a bit.

I would hope that in both the questions and the answers we would not impugn motives to hon. members of Parliament.

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[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

An Info Update sent to Regional Directors of Canada Employment Centres shows disturbing figures. Out of \$2,355 million worth of cuts, in 1994-95 and 1995-96, \$630 million will come from the Maritimes and \$735 million, each year, from Quebec. That is 60 per cent of unemployment insurance cuts for one third of the population.

How can the Minister argue that his government's priority is job creation, when its only strategy is an attack on 85 per cent of the unemployed, and moreover in the poorest provinces?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, these figures are not correct. In fact, the changes to the unemployment insurance program will affect only 2 or 3 per cent of the beneficiaries. I would appreciate it if the hon. member would report true facts, not fiction.