

Government Orders

Third, the reduction in transfer payments is equitable. This is where the fairness comes in again.

Under the previous government the 1980s were a time of greed, a time of surplus and a time of waste. The 1990s under the present government are a time of basic need, not greed, a time of high efficiency and productivity, and a time of sustainability, not waste. It is a time to sustain our finances as well as our environment, our resources and as we all know, our fish stocks.

• (1525)

We made a commitment to the men and women of Canada to reduce the deficit while restructuring social policy. We take that commitment very seriously.

The budget of February 1995 is more than a bunch of numbers. It is one part of a very large social plan, an economic plan, as well as a financial plan. It maps out a very prudent and courageous incredible path, not only for our generation but more important, for the next generation of young Canadians to come. I urge all hon. members to support this bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member for Cumberland—Colchester spoke about the changes to freight subsidies in eastern Canada. The way she presented it, in a very positive manner, is of course self-interested. However, I must say that this measure changes the whole picture.

Last week, there was a debate on railways. Now, they want to change the shipping assistance program and focus more on road transportation of goods. We must realize that in the past, many businesses had their goods shipped by rail. What did this mean? It meant that they avoided making abusive use of road transportation which, we know, is bad for roads at certain times.

It is all very well to talk about a form of flexible federalism because money is transferred to the provinces so that they can carry out public infrastructure projects. However after a few years, when the roads are a mess, everyone knows that it will be up to the provinces to repair and maintain them with their own funds. I would like to hear her comments on this. She can contradict me if she can. I believe that it is a short sighted view. It harms rail transportation which was appreciated by many.

The need to build a railway was even the pretext used to create the Canadian confederation and what do we have? All of a sudden, in order to control its expenditures, the federal government transfers an equivalent amount on the short term from the railways to road transportation or to businesses. I would like to hear what the member has to say about this transfer and about offloading such expenditures onto the provinces.

[*English*]

Mrs. Brushett: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Lévis for his comments. We have enjoyed a valuable asset in the rail system in building this country.

Many times I have gone through the province of Quebec, growing up in New Brunswick and living in Nova Scotia. It is part of our whole eastern heritage, part of our whole country.

These assistance programs are antiquated. They have come through the British North America Act in 1920, 1930, 1940. I say again that they are antiquated. It is important that we update and modernize. Our manufacturers, our grain growers, our furnace makers in Nova Scotia, our farmers, wherever they are, in Quebec or Nova Scotia have the same needs: to move products to the marketplace.

I cited some statistics taken by StatsCanada four weeks ago. Trains have increased some 19 per cent in freight in this country. If time permitted, I could address the question of railways, how a line in Nova Scotia from Sydney to Truro, my hometown was sold. It has become privatized. It was losing a million dollars a year and now it is making several million dollars a year. The amount of freight moving through those lines has increased. This is happening with short lines across the country. They are becoming profitable.

By taking the subsidies away we are allowing our manufacturers and farmers to have more flexibility. We are allowing them to be more efficient in the 21st century, to modernize and to look at creativity under a world trade organization as well. The transitional funding allows us to get to that point and to upgrade the highways.

• (1530)

The hon. member for Lévis knows as well as I from Cumberland—Colchester that the highways between Quebec and Nova Scotia certainly need upgrading so that we can share in trade wealth a lot better between each other.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to speak in this House on Bill C-76, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 27, 1995.

In its budget, the government announced a series of measures that jeopardize our social programs. Bill C-76 confirms what we feared most and shows the extent of the damage done to Quebec and to the provinces by the federal budget. Cuts in transfers to provinces amount to \$7 billion. That is \$7 billion of the federal deficit reduction taken off the back of provinces. These new cuts in transfers to provinces come on top of all the unilateral cuts made in the few last years that were so stridently criticized by