

Waste and Mismanagement

various budget measures to improve that situation and the situations which were pointed out.

Mr. Speaker, this opposition motion has no originality whatsoever because after listening to all the speeches made by opposition members, I have yet to hear suggestions or recommendations as to the departments or Crown corporations which should cut their budgets or staff. We are still waiting for those suggestions or recommendations.

● (1740)

This afternoon, the minister spoke about his program, and I shall come back to that later on. This day gives us an opportunity to put things in perspective, and I am certain that if the opposition can make any positive and concrete suggestions to reduce the deficit further or to improve our management criteria, they will be greatly appreciated by the minister whether he receives them in this House or in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The hon. member for Calgary Centre talked about the deficit generally, and also talked about deficits and inefficiency at the Post Office Department.

Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member spoke about this department in particular, I would like to remind him that if he had been there for the consideration of the Post Office estimates on March 5 last, when the Postmaster General (Mr. Lamontagne) appeared before the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, he would know what the minister said about the situation in his department. At the staff level, it should be noted that it is in this department that cutbacks have been the greatest. The department lost 1,850 man-years because of the cutback program.

The minister also spoke about the efficiency standards which are now applied in the Post Office and mentioned some data collected quite recently, more specifically last January. The minister said that 93 per cent of items for local delivery, or 40 per cent of all mail items, were delivered in the 24 hours following their mailing and that 98 per cent of the mail was delivered within 40 hours. Moreover, in eight of the 22 postal installations covered in the survey, 100 per cent of the mail was delivered within 48 hours after its mailing.

I wanted to speak about this particular department in view of the comments made by the hon. member for Calgary Centre in his speech supporting his motion. I now come back to the deficit item of the budget. It is stated that the deficit amounted to \$90 million for the year 1972-73. Thereafter, it increased yearly according to the various work agreements which were signed. In 1976-77, the deficit reached \$578 million, but it went down by \$19.5 million in 1977-78, and we expect a significant decrease this year even in the face of higher gas prices and wages under new collective agreements.

Mr. Speaker, I make all these comments to show how serious the hon. member really was in moving such a motion. I believe that the text of the motion is simply a pious wish aimed at blaming the government. The hon. member even said that

[Mr. Roy (Laval).]

he could criticize the activities of various departments all day, but I only gave the facts for the department that he chose himself and I am giving the answer that we received when we considered the estimates of the Post Office Department during the March 5 meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications.

Mr. Speaker, I shall now continue to comment on what the minister said this afternoon. I have no intention of dealing with all the matters raised by the President of the Treasury Board this afternoon, but I will simply deal with his reference to efficiency standards developed in some departments, and especially the particular attention granted to 24 departments accounting for 80 per cent of total Canadian government expenditures.

Efficiency and motivation standards were also established for public service employees. There has been, as well, a first report of these efficiency standards and new policies put forward by the government to reduce expenditures and increase efficiency. It may be easy at some point to reduce expenditures, but increasing efficiency and productivity in the public service is another story. The minister made reference to the energy conservation policy established in every department. He also referred to the purchase of compact automobiles in all departments. I wonder if at the provincial level the same recommendations were given to employees. The minister also referred to higher than 90 per cent reduction in first class transportation. The minister has also informed us in February last of the over-all budget allocations. What was the increase in estimates over the last few years? If criticism must be levelled at someone or some department, figures have to be put in context. So just what was the increase or the growth rate in Canadian government expenditures over these last five years? The increase in 1975-76 was roughly 18.5 per cent, 10.4 per cent in 1976-77, in 1977-78 the growth was 7.1 per cent, in 1978-79 they went up 9.5 per cent, and for 1979-80, our estimates read 8.9 per cent of total expenditures. Comparing the current year with fiscal 1975-76, where the growth rate was about 18.5 per cent, the current 8.9 per cent shows a significant decrease, greater than 50 per cent.

It is very easy to blame the government for higher expenditures, but where do these increases occur? What is the allocation of resources for various functions? Hon. members certainly received the distribution of those expenditures and it must be noted that regarding the health and welfare of Canadians, a total \$18.33 billion are allocated in the current fiscal year. Are opposition members claiming those national health expenditures should have been reduced? Those \$18 billion, 35.5 per cent of total Canadian government expenditures, are transferred to the provinces. Those funds collected by the Canadian government are redistributed for the health and welfare of Canadians. From this amount, we go on to debt service, \$8 billion or 16.5 per cent of the total budget. Economic expansion, \$5 billion, or 10 per cent, and \$5 billion for defence. But