

Estimates

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Lake St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, there has been a great deal of talk about the Budget leak, but the biggest story is the deliberate attack on the weak. The Government claims to be aiding an economy that is more lean. To millions of average Canadians, the Government is characterized simply as being mean.

One of the interesting things about the Estimates revealed this morning was that while we were wondering about the breach of security which is being investigated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Estimates revealed cut-backs in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Government claims to be attacking the deficit. It has chosen to attack the deficit on the backs of ordinary Canadians. It has attacked the family, it has attacked education, it has exploited workers to pay for the deficit, it has attacked the regions.

There could not have been a more dramatic demonstration of the heartlessness of this Government than the statement made by the Hon. Member from Prince Edward Island this morning, a statement which I found dramatic, compelling and truthful. An economy is to be wrecked in the interests of paring the deficit. As I recall, this year there will be a \$500,000 cut in defence at the expense of jobs in Canada. I do not know why the Government did not consider the very simple solution of bringing the troops back from Europe, thereby saving \$1 billion a year and demonstrating at the same time a commitment to the new notion of international security.

We are not looking at ways to pare the deficit, we are looking at ways to make those who are strong stronger at the cost of the weak. That is the clear message of this Budget. Listen to what has happened. Universality has been attacked, there can be no question about that. The chink is in the armour of universality with this Budget. Regional equality has now been compromised. In the public service and elsewhere, the commitment of the Government to sexual equality, racial equality and equality for all people in Canada will be compromised in the interests of the penurious rich.

• (1240)

Family allowances and old age pensions are to be selective. The value that we placed on our health system and the post-secondary educational system has been compromised. The Government purports to be interested in economic growth based on new knowledge in science and technology, and it is hardly even mentioned in the Budget papers. What we find in the Estimates is that that commitment to \$1.3 billion will be, as it has been in the past, substantially ignored. Where is the message of competitiveness that was supposed to be contained therein?

Agricultural supports are scheduled for termination. Passenger rail service is to be cut by virtue of a diminution in the subsidies provided to VIA Rail. This raises the issue of sustainable development, which is supposed to be the broad scope of focus in the Budget. What we hear is sustained economic growth, not sustainable development. The cut-backs at VIA Rail demonstrate the type of commitment to a transportation system which would be energy efficient, and which we ought to have, which the Government has abandoned.

With respect to sustainable development we find embedded in the Estimates another very interesting message, and that is a cut-back in the amount that was supposed to be committed to acid rain emission control. It is gone from the Budget.

What has also been ignored in the Budget is the very high proportion of increased deficit attributable to interest rates. The Government has stated that it is going to cut the Budget by about \$7 billion. Almost all of that is attributable to interest. This is not to be put on the backs of the poor. This is not to be put on the backs of the provinces that are dependent upon regional development funds. This is not going to be put on the backs of those who have benefited from high interest rates and who are putting that money in their pockets, because it is the rich who have been benefiting from high interest rates. If interest rates were decreased by one percentage point the deficit could be decreased by an additional \$1.5 billion, as we all know.

The Government has missed the point in all of this. We are going to be plunged into a recession. Unemployment will increase by 1 per cent, and inflation will rise again. On top of our Government's own contribution to a recessionary situation that will be seen in the next couple