

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 16, 1983

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1105)

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 21

[English]

TOURISM

EFFECT OF ALCOHOL BEVERAGE TAXES

Mr. Gus Mitges (Grey-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, once again I am making a further plea for the tourist industry in my riding of Grey-Simcoe and throughout Canada. There is no question that the tourist industry in Canada is in dire straits. It is not only faced with serving fewer tourists, but it has to deal as well with detriments and roadblocks created by the various Governments, especially in the field of taxation, such as taxes on accommodation, taxes on food, and extremely high taxes on alcoholic beverages and on gasoline. To top this off, the tourist industry is facing yet another detriment, another hike in fares by the six major airlines in Canada.

In the first seven months of this year hotel beverage income was down, and occupancy has dropped a further 10 per cent. On the other hand, the federal Government raked in \$6 billion in alcohol taxes alone in 1981-82, a 16 per cent jump, not to mention the added billions garnished by the provincial Governments.

Surely it is quite evident that by raising travelling costs, by charging almost double for a gallon of gasoline than do our neighbours to the south, by excessive taxation on spirits, and the high cost of accommodation in Canada, everything possible is being done to discourage foreign tourists from coming to Canada. Everything possible is being done to discourage a real opportunity to increase tourism and reduce our tourist deficit further. Therefore, I call upon all branches of all Governments across our country to get together and apply some much needed common sense to solve our tourist problems so that we can get on with the job of developing this very important industry to its full potential.

* * *

VIA RAIL

DEMAND THAT EDMONTON-VANCOUVER SERVICE BE RESTORED

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Axworthy) is announcing today,

outside Parliament, the restoration of certain of the VIA Rail services that were abandoned by the Government, outside Parliament, and without public hearings, last year. My Party, which held the public hearings which this Government refused to hold, and which opposed the unilateral shutdown of VIA Rail services, is pleased that the Government is beginning to reverse its position.

However, I am most concerned that the announcements that are being made today make no reference to the VIA line between Edmonton and Vancouver. That is one of the major tourist routes in Canada and should be restored immediately. Effective rail passenger service on that line would not only help the local economy in western Canada, it would have significant positive impact upon Canadian tourism, our balance of payments, and upon Canadian economic recovery generally. Also, it would add dramatically to Canadian national unity because it would be good for the people of this country to have an easy opportunity to see the grandeur of the Canadian Rocky Mountains and to feel a part of our country.

Let me speak briefly of the community of Jasper. That community has been hit hard three times by transportation policies of this Government. First, there has been a reluctance to give us adequate air transport. Second, there have been continuing threats to close down the Banff-Jasper Highway. Finally, there has been the unilateral abandonment of VIA Rail service. It may be that the Minister is letting out his announcement a piece at a time in accord with his own political agenda. I make the point that the economic and tourist development of western Canada is too important to leave to the Minister's political agenda. I hope he will restore the VIA service immediately.

* * *

HEALTH

DANGERS PRESENTED BY PROLIFERATION OF PERSONAL HEADPHONE STEREO SETS

Mr. Stanley Hudecki (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, millions of portable stereo sound systems are being sold around the world. Strapped to your belt and listened to by headphones, these personal stereos have become the fad among joggers and cyclists. While a recent article in *The British Medical Journal* praised the virtues of these sound systems, others have warned that they can lure the unwary to destruction of their hearing, particularly when the volume is turned up. Recent research at Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford has shown that these personal stereos can produce up to 105 decibels of sound. By comparison, at ten feet the noise of a pneumatic drill is 90 decibels.