

obvious, with the obsession of the opposition about deficits, it is essential for Via Rail to rationalize its services. When I use such terms, it reminds me of Mr. Bussi res, but VIA Rail would have experienced some troubles if it had not done it. And what does the rationalization of services more specifically means? It means that we had to purchase immediately from the Bombardier company in Canada the cars needed to modernize the equipment of VIA Rail.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think that it was quite easy to criticize the very difficult decision taken by the Minister for External Relations (Mr. Pepin) to eliminate VIA Rail services. However I have the vague impression, Mr. Speaker, that if the roles had been reversed, that rationalization, although slightly different at first sight, would have been substantially the same. However, the present Minister of Transport is keeping his commitment. What has he done? He has stated that he will review the services which have been eliminated. The former Minister of Transport said of such statements that they are vote-catching manoeuvres. Once again, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that doing the right thing cannot be considered electioneering. I think, Mr. Speaker, that it would be more advisable to alter a questionable decision than to leave it to another government.

Of course, I should like to thank in the first place the member for Vegreville for having given me the opportunity to deal with transport. I think the present Minister of Transport is a rather dynamic minister; his action should be encouraged so that he remains dynamic. He has his department well in hand. He puts forward rigorous user-oriented policies and, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that minister deserves our encouragement; I applaud him unequivocally.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): A ten-minute period is allotted to questions and comments. The Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski).

[English]

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the Hon. Member's contribution to a transportation debate, unlike the Minister of Transport (Mr. Axworthy). I could never make the charge that he was incompetent or lacked knowledge in the field of transportation because he demonstrates that every time he rises in the House to make a speech or whenever he participates in committee.

I can be very objective when I say complimentary things about the report of the Standing Committee on Transport with respect to domestic air policy in Canada because I was not a member of that committee. I want to echo the words that I have heard in this Chamber before and words that I have uttered earlier stating that the report was a piece of excellent work. Having regard to that, and given the fact that this was such an excellent report, which drew together the opinions and the recommendations not only of the industry but the users and a whole host of other interests, and that it does lay the groundwork for a practical and orderly form of deregulation, could the Hon. Member explain to the House why the present

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Minister and the former Minister of Transport showed such total disrespect for this report? They ignored it. They did not acknowledge it. They did not meet with the Transport Committee nor did they take any positive initiative toward accepting or adopting any of the recommendations. I say that applies both within the confines of the Transport Committee and publicly. The report was totally ignored. As a matter of fact, when the present Minister first started his campaign for deregulation, I do not know whether he realized that this report was in existence. It seems he has just discovered it in the last day or so. But I think it is totally disrespectful of this Minister and of the former Minister to have ignored so blatantly such an excellent piece of work.

Mr. Deniger: Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite clear that the former Minister of Transport, the Minister for External Relations (Mr. Pepin), discussed our report with several Members *in camera* and publicly. I think it is pretty safe for me to say that he did not agree with the principal recommendations. To say that he ignored the report is not accurate. What is important is that the present Minister made a commitment in the Transport Committee to come before us—

Mr. Mazankowski: When did he discover the report?

Mr. Deniger: He must have discovered it quite shortly after he was appointed, Mr. Speaker, because I brought it to his attention within a week or so. I know he discovered it quite quickly. Again, knowing the firm and sad opposition of the civil servants in the Department, it is not strange that the Minister had to appoint his own task force to look into this report and to report back to the committee in May. Again, we should applaud the Minister.

Mr. Fennell: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to reply and I want to make a few comments. I was interested in a part of the speech made by the Hon. Member for La Prairie (Mr. Deniger), the part that was non-political. But the only people listening to him were those on this side of the House. His own colleagues buried themselves in papers, looked around and talked to each other. At times during our Finance Committee meetings, a committee of which we are both members, the Hon. Member confused me, because I believe he really is a Conservative.

● (1500)

I would like to correct one thing the Hon. Member for La Prairie (Mr. Deniger) said. He referred to my lack of knowledge on the Crowsnest Pass. He may be right, but I would like to point out that I have far better facilities on this side, along with my colleagues, than he has on that side to find the good and the bad of the Crowsnest Pass. I did some research, and I was able to talk on the Bill. As I said to my wife, I know far more about the Crowsnest Pass than I ever intended to know.

Mr. Deniger: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his kind words. However, I have to remind him that for the first four years of my life in Ottawa, two years with the Canadian Transport Commission and two years with Otto