

Does the Minister have the nerve to rise again in his seat and tell these workers, right here in the House, there is nothing to get excited about?

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I certainly do have the nerve to rise again in my seat, and I would even go so far as to inform my hon. that I don't understand why she didn't at least check her information against the figures I gave two hours ago. Mr. Speaker, Quebec will lose 994 jobs, including 912 in Montreal, which is certainly not what the figures the Hon. Member quoted imply. So before getting worked up about figures that are wrong—I kept telling them: Wait for the real documents! I can see getting the figures wrong with leaked documents, but now they have the real documents, and they still can't get their facts straight.

Once again, I wish you would check your figures, and I wish you would realize that the collective agreements for these employees are the very best in Canada, and that we will spend \$140 million so employees can benefit from the advantages of the agreements they signed.

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Once again, Madam Speaker, the Conservative Government has abandoned the entire Montreal region. More than 900 jobs are directly affected I said "more than" and thousands of other jobs in related sectors will disappear. What does the Prime Minister intend to do to help the entire Montreal region which is already disadvantaged, and especially the families affected by this decision?

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, the Government of which I am a member has done for Quebec and Montreal what the previous government never did. Mr. Speaker, I repeat that the Conservative Government has done a great deal for Montreal and will continue to do so. However, when difficult decisions have to be made, whether those decisions happen to concern Montreal or other areas in this country, we make those decisions in terms of the national interest, which is the case with the decisions we made today.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of the House to the presence in our gallery of Mr. Charles-Ferdinand

Nothomb, speaker of the Chamber of representatives, and Mr. Edward J. Leemans, senator and honorary speaker of the Senate, who are accompanied by a delegation of Belgian parliamentarians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

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[English]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Earlier today in his press conference he indicated that he encourages any proposal to take over and operate a rail passenger service. In fact, according to a wire story tour operator Sam Blyth said today that he has permission from Transport Minister Bouchard and VIA Rail President Ron Lawless to start a luxury continental service from Toronto to Vancouver beginning next June. Tickets go on sale October 14. The cost is \$2,495 a person. Anyone else who wants to buy a piece of the national dream need only contact Ron Lawless.

How can the Minister guarantee the continuation of a national rail passenger service if he is going to sell it off literally piece by piece?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the information given by this member is absolutely false.

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, perhaps he might want to talk to Sam Blyth who has put out a press release that was on *Midday* today.

I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Transport. It is interesting to note that in terms of cross Canada services the Minister of Transport has announced that the Canadian, which uses the Canadian Pacific lines, is to be cut out entirely, yet the Super Continental that uses CN lines, which according to his own documents is more expensive for VIA to operate on, is going to remain.

Could the minister tell this House whether this choice of routing, the choice of CN over CP, is based on the needs of the travelling public or on the needs of the president of VIA Rail who is also the president of the CNR?