

Supply

We have also suggested that we look into something which has been looked at several times by both governments, that is, the rail bus which would be used to service remote lines.

The final recommendation that we make is with regard to the remote lines in this country. If my memory serves me correctly, \$45 million a year is devoted to serving remote lines. In the answer to one of my questions to the minister and to Mr. Lawless we were told that the remote lines in this country, of which there are nine, were mandated and that they must be served.

I did some extensive law research into that particular question and found out that the remote lines were not mandated. It was suggested at one time when these remote areas in our country were not served by any other mode of transportation that they should be given passenger rail service.

I suggest that the government has not done its homework with respect to these remote lines because, as it stands now, eight of the nine remote lines are serviced by a Department of Transport airport, highways and adequate bus service, and are therefore no longer remote lines. Yet we continue to pay \$45 million a year for servicing these areas.

All I am saying is that it is worth further study. Again we go back to the very first Liberal recommendation and the recommendation of the transport committee that we need that year of moratorium, of not doing anything, so that we are able to analyse these particular and very strong areas to come up with a plan to maintain passenger rail service in our country.

I can see that my time is getting short. Let me just mention that there is absolutely no wisdom or logic in the way that this government has decided to provide passenger rail service across northern Ontario. I will just leave that. It will be the subject of further discussion at a later date.

Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's most famous Conservative, had a vision. He had a vision of this country united from sea to sea. When I talk about John A. Macdonald and the railways in this country, I am not talking about the lack of rail passenger service or an airline. What we are lacking is a concept and a vision of the transportation requirements of all Canadians, not just those Canadians living in highly populated areas who

if they get train service or plane service on a less frequent basis will still not be jeopardized great deal.

I am talking about Canadians in areas of our country, in Atlantic Canada, northern Ontario and parts of the west, who when January 15 rolls around will not be able to travel on one very necessary mode of transportation. I am sure that John A. Macdonald did not intend that this country be operated without a viable network to maintain our unity and to maintain our economic basis. It is not fair to all Canadians, and it is not fair to Canada.

Mr. Belsher: Madam Speaker, my hon. friend talks about the vision of Sir John A. Macdonald and the uniting of this country. I would like to remind my hon. friend that when Sir John A. Macdonald had this vision we did not have a highway system from coast to coast. Airplanes had not even been invented yet. The only viable way for people to travel from one side of the country to another was to use the train. He is quite right in pointing that out.

The percentage of people making intercity trips in Sir John A.'s time was likely 90 per cent or more, whereas nowadays a very low percentage of people make such trips. Why does he not come up to the modern day and recognize the changes that have taken place in our country?

I was glad that he pointed out that there have been capital expenditures made for the new engines and so on, but he failed to point out that the government is continuing to spend money on capital improvement for the electrification of stainless steel cars. That is in the budget of VIA Rail for the coming months.

The opposition would like to make it sound like we have cut off all the funding to VIA Rail and nothing could be further from the truth. We are cutting down on the amount of funding that will be going to VIA Rail because we have a serious problem in our country. I wish the opposition would start to recognize it and try to help sell the idea that we have to get a handle on the overexpenditures of the Government of Canada. That is what this is all about.

Mr. Comuzzi: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that my friend would mention the absence of some transportation modes during the period that we are talking about. I spent a very interesting evening last Friday night at an institution in Thunder Bay called the Old Fort, which is a true replica of Canada as it was in the late 18th century.