

is already built. They will, among other things, provide more capacity, faster service, greater flexibility and, equally important, provide the shipyards with some needed activity.

Ms. Mitchell: What about western shipyards?

Mr. Mazankowski: As far as the West is concerned, naturally we will not overlook the West. As I said, this Government has representation from all regions of the country and we are reminded of the regional strengths and opportunities every week when we meet in caucus. Being a westerner I would certainly not want to overlook the West.

Notwithstanding the fact that I come from an inland part of Canada, I am very interested in marine activities and have always been. I am one who personally favours the gradual redevelopment of a deep sea fleet. There are some difficulties in that and there are different schools of thought on the subject, but we are going to have the benefit of a task force which is going to be bringing down some recommendations. I hope that when that is presented, perhaps the Government will be able to respond with a policy paper.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): There are only a few seconds left in the question and comment period, so I will recognize now the next speaker in the debate.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating you, Sir, and all your colleagues in the chair on your appointment in this new Parliament. I want to say how pleased I am to be back here and especially to be sitting straight across from my good friend, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski). For most of the last 16 years we have sat on the same side of the table in committee and the same side of the House here. However, now that he is over there, I expected that when he got up to speak in this debate he would have something to say about what is going on in his Department; not what is being done with it or for it but what is being done to it. I was hoping we would hear some explanation about the, as I add them up, \$288 million worth of cut-backs in his Department. I would like to have had an explanation as to what the Government's plans are regarding branch lines. Does this mean it is just delaying rehabilitation or does it mean it cancelled rehabilitation?

I would also like an explanation about more user-pay charges. My colleague, the hon. gentleman from Vegreville, led the criticism in this House of a former Minister of Transport who inaugurated user-pay. We had a continuation of that policy under the short-lived Tory Government in 1979, and we have a continuation of Liberal policy under this Government now. User-pay means another \$34 million in airline taxes. The Minister carefully tried to get himself off the hook on the Crow rate. I should remind the House, Mr. Speaker, for those who were not here at the time, that the Minister, as transport critic for the Conservative Party, took something like 40 minutes to make a major policy statement last September 13 dealing with one of his amendments to Bill C-155. He laid it on the line and made it very clear where his Party stood on that legislation and what his Party would do with it when it

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got a chance. He was unequivocal about his partisan stand on it. He said, "The goal will be to maintain the existing Crow rate for the producers of Canada and at least ensure that it is guaranteed in the present statutory form until the review process is completed in 1985-1986". The Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) was sitting there that night. He heard him. I will call him to be one of my witnesses. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) will also bear witness, as will everyone else who was there that night. The Minister made a superb presentation on why the statutory grain rate should be kept for western grain producers. Too bad he was not as superb today, or anywhere close to being superb.

I also want to say that this Government has more first priorities than anyone I have ever heard of or seen in the years I have been here or anywhere else. I have heard all kinds of statements and press releases for the last number of months about first priorities and sacred trusts. There was a first priority on unemployment. It was a sacred trust. Then it turned out there was another first priority and sacred trust in reducing the deficit. There were other first priorities such as women's rights and aboriginal rights. Members opposite have a lot of first priorities. They are still trying to figure out which ones should be first, although I think they decided that last Thursday night. The first priority for them is the deficit. Well, Mr. Speaker, a deficit is a debt.

Mr. Fraser: This one is a growing debt.

Mr. Benjamin: One acquires debt for positive and constructive reasons. You acquire a debt to buy a home, a tractor, a combine, a fishing boat or some nets. You acquire a debt to expand your business. In the acquiring of those debts people go to work. Any part of a deficit which is acquired for those things, whether by individuals, a private company or a government, is a positive and self-liquidating debt. Any debt or deficit acquired for productive purposes is a positive debt. The Government should stop being so hypnotized by that part of the deficit.

● (1550)

If you reduce the deficit, you automatically increase unemployment. The measures announced last Thursday night are going to increase unemployment. We can argue about whether it will cost 20,000 or 100,000 jobs, but it is going to increase unemployment, especially if you reduce deficits for positive investments in our economy which create jobs.

A major portion of the \$93 million that is paid to VIA Rail is for the implementation of projects promised in the past seven years, new transcontinental passenger equipment which would put people to work in Thunder Bay, Trenton, Sydney or at Bombardier at La Pocatière outside of Montreal. It would put people to work for something which is needed by the nation, which is the responsibility of the national Government. The private sector is not involved in operating VIA Rail. The private sector would be involved in building new equipment for VIA Rail, which puts people to work, but the Government cuts