

Adjournment Debate

VIA will continue to provide service to truly isolated communities that have no alternative means of transportation. The minister also indicated that he will be reviewing the transportation needs of these truly isolated communities along the remote routes to determine whether more cost-effective means of access could be introduced.

Most of the communities in question are located along the eight remote routes which VIA continues to operate. The remainder will be serviced through the Winnipeg-Capreol portion of the restructured western transcontinental service. The truly isolated communities in each case are identified as those points where VIA now makes scheduled stops which do not have any regular commercial air services and do not have all-weather highway access to the national transportation system.

The hon. member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke has put forward the concept that the communities of Revelstoke, Golden and Field should also be taken into consideration as isolated communities because they have no air service and because their highway connections are periodically interrupted during severe winter conditions. All three of these communities are located on the Trans-Canada Highway, as I have mentioned earlier. I can assure the hon. member that Canada has many communities which would welcome a road access as good as that enjoyed by the three communities that he has just mentioned, even with the inconvenience of severe winter conditions.

• (1800)

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Madam Speaker, my rising the Minister of Culture and Communications on the management practices of the National Arts Centre.

The minister's response to me, as reported in *Hansard* at page 5474, stated that the NAC was an "Ottawa issue", was and is completely unacceptable to me. The NAC is a national institution created by Parliament and maintained by Parliament.

A few months back, I requested the minister to hold a public enquiry into the management practices of the NAC. The reason I did this was precipitated by a series of events or skirmishes, call them what you wish. There were labour problems, firings, some still before the

Labour Board; a malaise unprecedented before in the institution's 20-year history; a shifting of funds from NAC programming into the untested field of high definition television; the music director's non-renewal of contract, and an orchestra that was out on strike. The NAC has not had an increase in its budget for seven years. This concerned me greatly. I question this government's commitment to culture or the arts in Canada. As another example I can cite the \$140 million cut to the CBC.

Federal funding of the NAC has not kept pace with inflation. The chairman of that board is quoted in the local press as saying; "The NAC is in a perilous position financially". Yet, when I reviewed the minutes of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture during the budget review, the chairman did not appear to defend the centre and relay this critical information on to the communications and culture committee. At the same committee hearing, the Director General was unable to produce budget figures when asked to do so by the committee.

If there is insufficient funding of the NAC, and I do believe that there is, the board chairman and the Director General should be making Parliament aware of this insufficiency.

To quote Maureen Forrester: "To fail to do so is a breach of the board's moral responsibility".

The NAC of late has suffered a drastic erosion of trust on all sides. The orchestra strike has ended, but let us not hide our heads in the sand and assume that all problems have been resolved.

The Minister of Communications has responded by letter to my request for a public inquiry. His response was that the management of the NAC is within the purview of the board and so Parliament should not intervene. However, does the minister not realize that the responsibility of the board falls under the purview of this Parliament and this government should be making definite enquiries?

As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to Canadians to ensure that this national institution is given the care, the scrutiny and in-depth analysis that Canadians have been asking for. If this organization is financially starved, then we as legislators have a responsibility to address this issue. The Minister of Communications said: