

## CONSULTATION QUERY

**Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex-Windsor):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. His Government has promised to consult Canadians with respect to key policy changes. Will he inform the House which Canadians he consulted with respect to these cuts which will affect so many communities across the country?

**Hon. Sinclair Stevens (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion):** Mr. Speaker, in reply to the Hon. Member's question, it is a contradiction of fact to state that a mathematician can be a socialist.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Blackburn (Brant):** What about Bertrand Russell?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Would the Minister like to answer the question?

**Mr. Stevens:** In direct response to the Hon. Member's supplementary, he indicated that I had said there was a 35 per cent reduction in the funding. It is a 35 per cent increase in the funding next year compared to this year. In my book, that will help create jobs for Canadians.

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## VIA RAIL

## AGE OF LOCOMOTIVES—GOVERNMENT PLANS

**Mr. Alan Redway (York East):** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Transport I will direct my question to the Minister of State for Transport. In view of the fact that the Canadian Transport Commission's report of the inquiry into the on-time performance of VIA Rail has indicated that no other railway in the industrialized world entrusts mainline services to a fleet of locomotives as old, outdated and obsolete as VIA does; in view of the fact that VIA lost some one million passengers between the years 1982 and 1983; and in view of the fact that in spite of the recent reductions and cuts we are still subsidizing VIA to the extent of \$600 million per year, will the Minister tell us what plans, if any, he and/or the Department has for improving both VIA Rail's performance and its financial track record?

● (1440)

[Translation]

**Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of State (Transport)):** Mr. Speaker, I can inform the Hon. Member that the investment plan for VIA Rail has not been cut but will be spread over a longer period of time. The amounts earmarked for improving the VIA Rail fleet will stand, and we intend to use these to improve the service criticized by the Transport Commission. However, I think the Hon. Member should give this Government a chance to make its own assessment before speaking of VIA Rail in this way.

## Oral Questions

[English]

## ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

## ONTARIO PRISON SENTENCES

**Mr. John V. Nunziata (York South-Weston):** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Solicitor General my question is directed to his Parliamentary Secretary. I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary is aware of published reports concerning sentencing practices of Ontario courts. Figures contained in *The Globe and Mail* last week indicated that the number of people from Ontario sentenced to federal prisons during the past two years grew twice as fast as the national average. An official from the Correctional Service of Canada was quoted as saying that this large and recent influx is putting a serious strain on the federal penal system.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary tell the House when the Minister first became aware of this situation? Second, can he tell us what action, if any, is being taken to address this problem? Third, has the Minister discussed this matter with his provincial counterpart? Finally, can the Minister give the House an assurance that Ontario's sentencing practices of handing down longer prison terms are not a result of overcrowding in provincial institutions and a deliberate attempt to direct the overflow to federal penitentiaries?

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to answer that encyclopaedic question. The Hon. Member may not be aware of the fact that there has been—

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Crosbie:** Please do not interrupt me. I get rattled.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Crosbie:** I get rattled when faced with the rats, Mr. Speaker.

A sentencing commission has been appointed and is headed by Mr. Justice Sinclair. Hopefully that commission will be reporting within the next two years on the principles that should govern sentencing in Canada, in order to try to avoid differences across the country, including Ontario. The matter brought forward by the Hon. Member is certainly under consideration and is being dealt with.

**Mr. Nunziata:** Mr. Speaker, seeing that there is so little to rattle in the can, I can understand why the Minister can get rattled so easily.

## STUDY OF ONTARIO PRACTICE

**Mr. John V. Nunziata (York South-Weston):** Mr. Speaker, there appears to be a great deal of speculation as to why this Ontario influx is taking place. Is the Minister prepared to release the details of any study done by his Department so that the causes of this phenomenon can be understood and a solution sought among all interested groups?