

*Rail Service*

Getting away from the specific Belleville area, I want to ask the minister whether any thought is being given to the upgrading of roadbeds. After all, freight trains go over them and pound them pretty hard, whereas a light passenger train could use a roadbed three, four or five times as often and not apply the same kind of beating. Is any thought being given to putting a single rail, particularly into the Quebec-Windsor corridor and perhaps electrifying that portion for particularly high speed?

I notice in the statement that the minister talks about LRCs. I understand they are diesel equipment. Is there any thought of electrification, a single rail and more use of the Rideau area headquarters in Belleville?

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the management of VIA Rail will have heard the question about the desirability of good passenger service in that area. CN is aware of our general concern about the movement of jobs and centralization if it leads to movement toward large cities and away from small ones. Roadbed upgrading will be an important issue in relation to passenger service. The lighter trains which are now being ordered may, in fact, accomplish much better speeds on the existing roadbeds, but obviously the matter will have to be looked at.

I do not look toward electrification in the short term in this part of the country. Recent research which was undertaken by Transport Canada has made available the facts upon which electrification may well proceed, but very likely first in the mountain regions of the country rather than in other areas.

**Mr. Crouse:** Mr. Speaker, the announcement by the minister of the purchase or construction of 22 locomotives and 50 coaches at a cost of \$90 million, to be purchased by the federal government and VIA Rail from Bombardier, will of course not go unnoticed in Nova Scotia. I would like to ask the minister, who I know is aware of the ability to construct freight cars in Trenton, if in his planning he has given any thought to the high rate of unemployment in the province of Nova Scotia and to the possibility of ascertaining whether the plant at Trenton would be considered as a possible place to provide some components for this project.

Second, I noticed that by 1980 the service will be improved between Montreal and Quebec. Once again, I would like to remind the minister that Halifax, Nova Scotia, is one of the eastern terminals of the CNR. In light of the state of the track which presently exists between Quebec and Halifax, I would like to know if it is the intention of the government to examine this track in the hope of improving it, straightening it, upgrading it and providing an improved service to Atlantic Canada.

I notice in the minister's release that when this new equipment is put into service it will make available to VIA Rail, for western Canada and the maritimes some of the existing equipment. This brings to mind yet another question. When can we anticipate some of this existing equipment being put on the run between Quebec City and Halifax in order to update, upgrade and improve the service which we presently receive? It is very important to our area, and if I do say so, we feel that we are

being let down today by the government with regard to improving our over-all transportation system, especially as it applies to the CNR.

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Transport Commission is now looking at the question of the appropriate service between Montreal and the Atlantic, and I would not want to prejudge that except to underline that we indicated, as a matter of policy, the need to maintain a direct service from one end of the country to another as an irreducible minimum. Obviously, the upgrading will have to proceed from time to time. These trains will all be available by 1980 or 1981, and I am hoping that some of them, in the mix of old equipment and new equipment, can indeed be available for the western and Atlantic regions.

As far as Trenton is concerned, I will determine the likelihood of bid availability for supply there. Of course, the hon. member knows that I have had a great deal of concern for the Trenton area. At the present time, some hopper cars which are still being produced are, I think, still being manufactured there.

● (1612)

**Mr. Ritchie:** Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister, if there is a \$90 million order, whether it was arrived at by tender, if other companies were invited to participate—that is, if they have the capability—and what centres will benefit from this economic activity? Will DREE or some other government agencies be involved in this order?

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, the bid was on tender. There were four bids received and, as I indicated carefully, they were evaluated for all features. The supply will be spread over many different manufacturers. Perhaps the best thing would be for me to attempt to get out a more detailed statement on that than I have on hand at the moment, and endeavour to make that available.

The development of the LRC is, of course, something the government has had an important hand in over some time. Both through the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce and a PAIT grant of \$2.5 million, the development was assisted. Then Transport Canada spent \$1.12 million assisting in the testing of the equipment through the research and development centre. It was, therefore, a very happy thing indeed that the LRC, which may well have expansion potential, is the vehicle we are looking to today.

**Mr. Blackburn:** Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Transport this question. When VIA Rail comes on stream sometime next spring, when it becomes a separate entity, is it the intention to discontinue the passes of present employees of CN and CP and also those retired from CN and CP who have passes on those railways? Will these passes be continued once VIA Rail becomes a separate passenger service?

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, it certainly would not be the intention to do anything of the sort, but the question of the