

Mr. Nystrom: I noticed on the news this morning that there is only one lonely Premier who is voicing any support whatsoever for this Budget. That is dear old Grant Devine in the Province of Saskatchewan. Even Grant Devine is suffering from a great deal of lack of enthusiasm. He has about a year and a half to go before he becomes leader of the Opposition in Saskatchewan.

The unemployment insurance program is an attack on the poor. It is a tax on the poor. It is a tax on the workers.

[Translation]

It is the same thing with the other social programs. Mr. Speaker, I am wondering why there was not enough money in Mr. Wilson's Budget to set up a child care system. It is not there. There is no increase in the number of spaces for Canadian children. That is a serious matter, Mr. Speaker, there is no increase in that sector. There is nothing at all in terms of employment equity for women, nothing for minorities, nothing for the handicapped, nothing for all those people in the Minister of Finance's Budget.

And there are other things, Mr. Speaker. Instead of higher taxes and budget cuts for social programs.

• (1430)

[English]

I think, for example, of important areas like VIA Rail. I come from the riding of Yorkton—Melville. The CNR mainline comes through the City of Melville, and I remember Jean-Luc Pépin, who was the Liberal Minister of Transport back in the early 1980s—

An Hon. Member: A great Minister.

Mr. Nystrom: A great Minister, the Liberals say.

Mr. Kaplan: You didn't know when you were lucky.

Mr. Nystrom: It is time for a history lesson. When the Liberals were elected in 1980, they appointed a great friend of mine, Jean-Luc Pépin, as Minister of Transport. He would have made a great Minister of State for Cultural Affairs, Minister of Communications, Minister of Trade and things of that sort, but he knew nothing about Transport. He would not know a boxcar from a barnyard most likely. He decided to disband the transcontinental train that runs across western Canada. There was a great campaign. There were people in the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party who, unbelievably, united in the great fight against the Liberals and

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Mr. Pépin to bring back the trains and to bring back VIA. Finally, because of public pressure from people like the Mayor of the City of Melville and many other local people signing petitions, Pépin was replaced as Minister of Transport and the VIA service was brought back once again.

That was right before the election of 1984. At that time the current Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) said we will keep VIA Rail, we will expand VIA Rail. He said that people need the trains and will use those trains. The people believed him. The people elected him. They have re-elected him and now what do we get? In the Budget we get a cut-back of \$100 million in fiscal 1989-90 for VIA Rail.

Some Hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Nystrom: We get another cut-back of \$100 million next year in VIA Rail, and the third year in VIA Rail and the fourth year and the fifth year in VIA Rail, half a billion dollars.

I ask my wealthy friends in the front bench of the Conservative Party, millionaires' row, who is going to suffer? The poor people of Atlantic Canada? Will their passenger train service be saved? You tell me whether it will or not. Will the people of Melville keep the train service that goes through Melville and Watrous, Saskatoon and Biggar and on to Edmonton? Will they keep that train? Our wealthy Toronto Minister across the way, from Brampton I believe, says well, we subsidize those people out there. Mr. Speaker, his friends on Bay Street are the most subsidized Canadians that live here today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nystrom: The subsidies and handouts and welfare that go to big corporations in this country are a lot more than what goes to subsidize VIA Rail in a place like Melville or New Brunswick or Nova Scotia or British Columbia. The train is an important part of this country, in many ways the heart and soul of this country. Our Toronto Minister says it is nonsense. Well, I want to have that Toronto Minister come and talk to people on the Prairies and in Atlantic Canada. He will find that they want to keep their train and are going to fight to keep it. It is no wonder that the Conservative Party in the by-election in Alberta was rejected massively in March by the Reform Party because of insensitive policies of this sort. They do not understand western Canada.