

Supply

What the Minister of Transport has done is come to that conclusion before he has even seen VIA Rail's brief, before he has even examined the possibility. This Minister has allowed a Finance Minister and his particular wants and dictates at a particular point in time to shape the future in a fundamental way of rail passenger service in Canada. Surely nobody in this House can seriously believe that they can cut \$500 million out of VIA Rail's operating budget and expect there is going to be a rail passenger service in Canada. There is not going to be, by any stretch of the imagination, a national rail passenger service. Nor, with those kind of cuts, is there any serious ability to examine a forward, future looking concept, that is, the notion of high speed trains.

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Member who just spoke. I understand that if the VIA Rail service through Edmonton is cut, we will lose a thousand jobs in our city alone.

The Member will perhaps know that at Progressive Conservative hearings in 1981 and 1982, we found that each year something like a quarter of a million Atlantic Canadians took the train that goes through Maine. I assume that many of those people were students, many had low incomes, and many were senior citizens.

What does the Hon. Member think it will do regionally to Atlantic Canada? I guess we cannot do anything more to Newfoundland since it does not have a train. What does he think it will do to the Maritime Provinces if the train called "The Atlantic" going through Maine is cut?

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for his question. I was in Alberta last week and I happen to know that there is a great deal of concern in Edmonton about the possibility of Edmonton being dropped, with the loop that now runs into Edmonton being eliminated as part of the package of cuts about which I have just talked.

I can well understand that the Member is hearing the kinds of concerns Canadians are expressing across the country. In asking a specific question about Edmonton, noting Edmonton and then going on to reflect upon the cuts in Atlantic Canada—and given that the Hon. Member comes from the West and that we are of two different Parties; I do not want to be partisan about it—I think he reflects the feeling in this country in particular

about the regions. "Region" is a dastardly word. It denotes "afterthought" when policies are made at the centre. This plan will see a run continue from Quebec City to Windsor, but not much else anywhere in the so-called regions.

I think the Member reflects the feeling in this country which goes far beyond merely a transportation issue. The basic contract that we made in something called Confederation was that while we could not all be equal, the concept of citizenship would carry with it basic services that we could all depend upon. It is the feeling in this country that the basic contract called Confederation is being broken.

Via Rail is very much for Canadians who live not just outside of Quebec and Ontario, but those who live outside Toronto, Montreal. It is also for those people in northern Quebec and Ontario, as well as the other eight provinces. They have a feeling that the Government is walking away not only in this area but in so many areas from the basic contract that we bind ourselves to when we stand with pride, put our hands by our sides, and sing *O Canada*.

What Canada is it when it functions, according to this Government, only by market-place principles and when it functions only between Quebec City and Windsor? Canada is much broader than that, much wider than that, and its heart beats in more places than that, and this Government does not understand.

Mr. Thacker: Mr. Speaker, I would be interested if my colleague opposite would tell me when the provision of rail service to every Canadian became the heart of being a Canadian citizen.

Where I come from, we lost the railway when the Liberals were in power. As I recall, when the railway was set up originally the Liberals opposed it. That was back when John A. Macdonald was setting it up. Indeed, he lost an election over it. The Grits came in and did nothing about building the railway, and when John A. Macdonald came back into power, he finished it.

When did it become a fundamental part of Canadian citizenship? What about all the Canadians who fought wars and have not had a railway in terms of passenger service even since the beginning?