

creating employment in the province of New Brunswick this winter.

The dredging of the Miramichi River included in the estimates passed in this House last year has not taken place. The extension of the St. Leonard airport runway is not even on the drawing board. The tender calls for the training centre for Canadian Forces Base Gagetown and the "J" divisional headquarters for the RCMP are set back a year. The Dalhousie-Belledune port study is moving at a snail's pace and so is the market square project in Saint John. Port and harbour development in Saint John has not had a word of good news since the Conservative government left office.

DREE's participation in highway development in New Brunswick is diminished. The development of oil shale in New Brunswick, which has a potential as big as Hibernia—15 billion barrels of oil locked in the shale—is so far down on the National Energy Program inventory you need a telescope to find it. Why is this so?

For one reason the government is preoccupied with the constitutional issue to the exclusion of economic priorities. With over 30 cabinet ministers falling all over each other it seems no one can initiate action on the serious economic problems facing Canada at least until the Prime Minister becomes a modern day father of confederation.

In the meantime, the Canadian economy is in bad shape and is rapidly getting worse. Consider the Canadian National Express cutbacks which will result in 540 lost jobs in eastern Canada. What was the major factor in the losses that led to the cutbacks? A *Financial Post* article makes it clear that mismanagement was the major factor. It is a familiar story. A Crown corporation does not have the incentive to be efficient; that is the incentive provided by the profit motive.

However, the Canadian National Express has a special responsibility. A private company concerned only with profit can concentrate on the high volume customers and routes and forget about the average little Canadian who wants to send an odd-shaped Christmas parcel. CN Express as a public company has an obligation to serve the average little Canadian even if it makes no profit or actually loses money in so doing.

In recent years CN Express has become largely a trucking operation rather than a rail operation. But as fuel becomes more expensive it is likely the rail operations will become more and more important. The point has been made often that rail is far more energy efficient than highway transportation. With every increase in the price of oil, with the growing uncertainty and insecurity caused by strife in the Middle East, it becomes more imperative that Canada rebuild its rail system to the standard of comfort and efficiency that already is a fact in Europe and Japan.

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In the United States, while state governments are cutting back on funding for freeways and building up their rail systems, Canada is allowing Canadian National Express to lead the way downhill for this important segment of our transport economy. The government should stand firm against

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these cutbacks and press for an improvement in all rail services, freight, express and passenger.

Mr. Pepin: Did you write that?

Mr. Howie: If the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) listens, he will learn something.

It is not enough to play the old army game in saying we will close two-thirds of the operations in the maritime provinces and hope that people will say, when one station in Cape Breton and one in Charlottetown are kept open on a reduced scale, it could have been worse. This old trick will not work any more because maritimers have been fooled once too often, and in the maritimes people like little to be fooled.

It is intolerable that in the city of Fredericton rail travellers have to begin and end their journeys with a bus trip. They have the rails in place and they have the station. All it takes is an enlightened minister of transport to give the green light to the railways. This will help Canada conserve energy and put in place a modern rail transportation system.

I have now come full circle. I am right back where I started. I am advocating that Members of Parliament be given a meaningful role in enabling us to cut waste and extravagance. I believe the Canadian taxpayer should be given more value for his dollar. I believe that a major change in the economic policies of our government can reduce government expenditures by investing, instead of spending, in regional economic expansion. I believe energy self-sufficiency built on co-operation and mutual trust can be accomplished. I believe this nation has the resources and educated population to create jobs for all Canadians and, by increasing the number of taxpayers, reduce the burden on everyone. In that way we can balance our budget and reduce our taxes. All it takes is the will, the ingenuity, the hard work and the leadership. Right now we are waiting for the leadership, and we have been waiting a very long time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Mr. Speaker, the bill before the House this evening is a very important one for all Canadians. If we talk about parliamentary history, the reason for this bill goes right back to the beginnings of Parliament. I am sure some members were better history students than myself, but if they remember their history, back in 1066 King John met a group of his knights at Runnymede. They informed him they would no longer blanketly pay money to the Crown unless they had some kind of a say.

Some hon. Members: It was in 1215.

Mr. Mayer: I am sorry, I have the date wrong. It was in 1215. I am sure 1066 was close enough for the government which I am sure operates in much that way; a few hundred million dollars or a few hundred years here or there does not really make a lot of difference. I thank hon. members for the correction. The principle or the point is still valid. People were tired of paying money to the Crown without having a say in