

Much has been said about the state of rail transportation in other countries. I believe this bears some discussion. During the last few years all the western European nations have adopted plans to overhaul their existing rail passenger services. High-speed services operate in France, Britain and West Germany. In addition, France, Britain, The Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland are either building all new rail lines or upgrading existing lines to accommodate high-speed rail transportation service. It is anticipated that by 1995 a high-speed rail network should connect all major European cities. The investment in this high speed system will total \$39 billion in 1995 and \$92 billion in 2005—that is based on 1989 Canadian dollars—most of which will be funded by governments.

The Japanese inaugurated the world's first high speed train in the 1960s between Tokyo and Osaka. The route has been commercially successful and carries more than 130 million passengers a year. The Japanese have been working to extend the system the length of the country. The financial results of these extensions have been mixed as the costs of construction have been very high. Also, as population densities in the outlying areas are low and the distance between major centres quite long, the trains on these routes do not have the same high level of ridership as on earlier lines. For these two reasons, these lines require operating subsidies. While no specific information is available on the financing of high speed rail projects in Japan, the Japanese national railway is funded publicly.

In 1971 Amtrak took over 25 per cent of the rail passenger services in the U.S. All other passenger services were discontinued. By the early 1980s Amtrak had modernized its rail passenger services. The fleet is comprised of new locomotives or new modernized cars. A network of maintenance facilities has been completed and rail lines between New York and Washington have been upgraded for 200 kilometre an hour operation and between New York and Albany for 176 kilometre an hour operation. These improvements required a government investment of some \$4 billion.

Opposition members seem to forget that Amtrak is a little different creature than what we have in VIA. Amtrak has the ability to abandon services, something which the opposition has been quite vocal in denying to VIA Rail. Amtrak can freely set its own price on tickets.

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VIA Rail had to defend its pricing in front of the NTA when challenged by the bus systems. Amtrak receives direct subsidies from individual states that require uneconomic routes to be run. Yet provinces have been asked to do this in committee. I sat there and observed what was going on. Questions were put to the mayors of the corridor: "Would you participate in the cost of putting on a moratorium for a year?" The answer came back an emphatic no.

I read in this morning's paper that one of our premiers was gracious enough to say that he was sure that all Canadians would be willing to subsidize VIA Rail to the tune of an extra \$4 per person. Isn't that great? One of the premiers is volunteering that Canadians are willing to put out another \$4. The Canadian people are telling us to try to get the deficit under control. All we hear is carping from the opposition benches "spend more money".

It also was said today that the standing committee was unanimous in this decision. The standing committee I have heard was not unanimous in its decision. It was a majority of the committee that voted, but it was not a unanimous decision.

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): The chairman voted for it. He sits on your side.

Mr. Belsher: I was told this afternoon in a speech by the hon. member for Regina—Lumsden that it was unanimous. Now I hear otherwise. I do not know because it was an *in camera* meeting.

In national terms more than half of these countries that I have just cited have populations larger than Canada, and all have much higher population densities. Only the Quebec City—Windsor corridor matches the population densities of these other countries.

This government's decision is based on the economic, geographic and demographic realities of the country.

Let us look and see just what is happening between, say, Montreal and Toronto, or from Quebec City right through to Windsor. From Montreal to Quebec there is a cut-back of service. It is going from 48 round trips per week while maintaining 21. From Montreal to Ottawa it goes from 29 to 22. From Montreal to Toronto it goes from 43 down to 36. From Toronto to Ottawa it goes from 26 down to 19. From Toronto to Windsor there will be 30 trips per week. It will still have 30 trips a week.