

Borrowing Authority

convince one or the other that we ought to change our minds on that.

I now wish to address the matter of VIA Rail. I am sure that my hon. friend did not attend any of the VIA hearings that were held across Canada. If he had attended those hearings, he could have listened to the dozens of experts on all aspects of passenger rail service. They indicated if an enterprise is to succeed, there has to be investment capital to allow it to succeed. If one wants to curtail operations, then do what the Government has done.

When the present Deputy Prime Minister was Minister of Transport, I remember him stating in the House that we can make VIA Rail a viable enterprise. We can make VIA Rail the most exciting transportation system in the world. I remember the speeches time after time of how committed he said his Government would be to develop VIA Rail properly. That would require the proper investment in infrastructure. There has to be decent cars, decent tracks, a decent relationship between CN and CP, and a decent ticketing system. In other words, provide the resources to allow VIA to do the job.

I do not know if my hon. friend has ever ridden on VIA Rail. If he had ridden on VIA Rail, he would know that the frustration that exists with the people who work for VIA is unbelievable. They cannot do the job they know they could do because they have been hamstrung, the resources have been held back, and they have to offer a mediocre service in most parts of the country. Of course, for understandable reasons then, people do not take advantage of it.

As any good business person knows, to be successful there have to be the appropriate investments. The Deputy Prime Minister and previous Minister of Transport knows full well what those investments are. He spent hours articulating them for the previous Liberal Government. He spent hours and hours indicating what had to be done to make VIA a financial success. Then the players changed. The Liberals went to the opposition benches, and the Conservatives went to the government benches, and nothing happened. As a matter of fact, it worsened. There were cuts, cuts, and cuts. It is not

surprising that today we find VIA Rail in obviously very serious economic and financial difficulty.

Over the weekend we had the benefit of listening to Dr. Kenneth Hare. He spoke publicly on the environmental implications of eliminating much of VIA Rail passenger service. He pointed out that, particularly in the heavy corridor of central Canada from Windsor to Quebec City, if good passenger rail service is eliminated in that corridor, it is the only transportation system that is virtually guaranteed against the weather. In terms of future environmental problems, we should be developing a modern, first-class transportation passenger service in that corridor. One of the most eminent scientists on environmental matters that this country has ever seen was arguing that the Government should not proceed with its plans to dismantle VIA.

I do not know if I have answered the questions of my hon. friend adequately. In terms of a summary, no, the ranch was not a profitable corporation that was not paying income tax because it had gone out of business. Yes, I do not believe in a means test for senior citizens' pensions. Give VIA Rail the tools to do the job, give it the time, and, I use the words of the Deputy Prime Minister, "it would serve us well." Other than those points, I do not think I can add much more to the questions of the Hon. Member.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The period for questions and comments has now expired. Resuming debate with the Hon. Member for South West Nova.

[Translation]

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Madam Speaker, I have the honour today to speak on Bill C-11 concerning this Government's borrowing for the current fiscal year.

• (1250)

[English]

I have spoken at second reading and I have had occasion to pick up from that time when I spoke on the Borrowing Bill. At that time I mentioned what this Government will achieve during this fiscal year in hurting the poorer regions of this country. I mentioned the changes in the Unemployment Insurance Act, the financing arrangements with the provinces, and the cut-backs.

An Hon. Member: Hand-outs.