

cutbacks and condemn the ruthless and undemocratic way they are being made.

The Atlantic Limited has moved more people on the shortest distance between Halifax and Montreal than any other rail passenger train in the maritime provinces. The minister has refused to make public the 1980 monthly revenue expenditure and ridership figures for the Atlantic Limited. I asked him, in writing, to do this long before Parliament resumed this fall.

We have learned from independent sources that over 200,000 people have travelled on the Atlantic Limited in 1980, and that more have travelled on it in 1981. We know for a fact that over 140,000 people travelled through McAdam, New Brunswick, en route to and from Montreal.

The visiting Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) stuck his nose into the debate last week and indicated that for every dollar spent on tickets the Government of Canada had to contribute two dollars. He did not tell us that for the air mode, the figure is in excess of \$2 and for the limited marine transport in Canada it is even larger. I do not know what the Prime Minister thinks Canadians pay taxes for if not to hold our country together with a reasonable and responsible transportation system. Most certainly we are not paying taxes to buy him a new stone desk or pave his driveway or keep him in matches and candles.

One good thing to come out of this whole mess is that the Halifax-Saint John, New Brunswick, rail liner has been extended to Fredericton. I look upon this as a progressive move, but again, when a good move is made, the madhatters in the Department of Transport work on the schedule. The train is scheduled to leave Fredericton at 2.15 in the afternoon and arrive in Saint John at four o'clock. I ask you to guess when the return trip from Saint John to Fredericton leaves, Mr. Speaker? It leaves at ten minutes after four—just ten minutes after passengers arrive. Saint John is a great city but what can anyone do in ten minutes? If they could do anything in ten minutes, is it worth the time and expense of getting there and back?

The train goes on to Halifax where it arrives at 10.50 at night. It leaves there at 9.40 the next morning, so at least you could get a good night's sleep in Halifax although it might be a pretty expensive one!

For passengers travelling west from Fredericton the story is even sorer. It now takes 13 hours, and with the new system it will take 20 hours. It seems that people are at work in the Department of Transport trying to discourage rail passenger service.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary to use his good offices to see if the schedule could not be revised so that more people could ride the trains, and thus help improve the service. The cruel abandonment of the Edmunston to Moncton dayliner contributes to the isolation of Plaster Rock, Napadogan, McGivney, Minto and many small communities in southern New Brunswick which do not have an alternative form of public transportation. Plaster Rock got some good news on September 29 from the CTC. An order was made that the

existing station facilities at Plaster Rock be kept clean, heated and lighted for the comfort and convenience of the travelling public. But on November 15, there will be no travelling public.

● (2205)

The way to go, I suggest, is to modernize and use the light rapid comfortable trains. Therefore in April, and again in May of this year, I urged the minister to include the maritimes in this train system and to bring these more modern trains to downtown Fredericton. On July 14, I received a letter from the vice-president of VIA Atlantic who referred to my correspondence to the minister and said he was answering for him. His letter reads:

When the LRCs were first ordered in 1977, it was our firm intention to assign two train sets for operations in the maritimes. However, conditions have changed considerably since then. We must now live within a financial envelope system for rail passenger service in Canada, and in order to ensure that the best possible return on investment be earned by the LRCs, circumstances dictate that we must use the first ten sets in the Quebec-Windsor corridor.

When the minister was in Saint John, New Brunswick, a few weeks ago and lecturing politicians to the effect that we should be unpopular, advice which he himself has taken very well, he indicated that maritimers would soon be travelling on the LRCs. Where? In the Windsor corridor? I would like the parliamentary secretary to clarify this matter for us tonight and indicate that maritimers will be travelling on the LRCs in the maritimes.

My final request tonight is for the visiting Prime Minister. The next time he goes around the world on a tour, will he please take the Minister of Transport with him?

Mr. Robert Bockstael (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked if there was reasonable doubt about the correctness of the government's decision to terminate some VIA Rail services, particularly in New Brunswick.

The government's decision was taken only after careful consideration of all the factors. It was not an easy one. It was recognized that the discontinuance of certain services would cause some inconvenience, but it is hoped that those affected will be able to adjust relatively quickly.

The reason for discontinuing the Atlantic train is based on the extremely high cost of operating transcontinental services. The Atlantic and the Ocean together cost the Canadian taxpayer over \$45 million in 1980, which represents a subsidy of \$76 for the average passenger. A passenger travelling the full distance from Halifax to Montreal would pay a fare of \$58, but the true cost of his trip is \$210. The Canadian taxpayer pays the difference of \$152.

Transcontinental trains are expensive to run because they provide a full range of sleeping and dining facilities designed for long-distance travel, even though the trains are primarily used for shorter trips where these facilities are not required.

Once the government had decided to retain only one of the two transcontinental services, the question became which one? Both trains carried approximately the same number of people in 1980; the Atlantic carried 286,000 and the Ocean carried