

friendly, mass means of transportation; that is, high-speed trains.

The committee has said it cannot accept that Canada alone among all nations of the industrialized world, Canada alone has to run up the flag of defeat, Canada alone has to make this massive expression of self doubt and lack of confidence in our own ability to run an efficient rail passenger service in this country. The committee has said it cannot accept that.

The report was tabled a month ago. In that month, there has been no concrete, substantial response from the Minister of Transport, nothing from the Prime Minister, no consideration.

In that month, the issue of VIA Rail and the determination of those Canadians who believe in its future has not wavered. The government makes a terrible mistake if it assumes that the issue will go away. In that month, even greater numbers of coalitions of citizens groups have been formed. In that month, the mayors of the corridor cities have come together and formed an organization to fight for VIA Rail. In that month, the mayors of every single town in Atlantic Canada have coalesced to fight for the future of VIA Rail. Why, Madam Speaker? Because the stats speak for themselves. While the cut to the national network is 50 per cent, in Atlantic Canada, 91 per cent of the service will disappear, effective January 15. The best number for the whole region is a 57 per cent cut. Many of the routes are totally eliminated.

What we want the Government of Canada to understand is what the Prime Minister said he understood when he went to eastern Europe. The Prime Minister went to eastern Europe and he said, isn't it a wonderful thing, isn't it a great day in the history of the world and civilization and democracy when the voice of the people echoes so loudly that those who have the power in the governments of eastern Europe not only must listen but must act. This is the true test of democracy.

Is it not tragic and ironic that a Prime Minister would hail the voice of the people in eastern Europe, those who not only insist they be heard but that their voice be heeded, would come back to this country and not only turn a deaf ear on the mayors of every major municipality in Canada, turn a deaf ear on the premiers of every province of Canada, turn a deaf ear on a standing

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committee of the House of Commons that recommended a moratorium, but would turn a deaf ear on the concept of democracy, representative government? This is the Prime Minister who promised us renewed federalism, co-operative federalism and who now faces every single interested group in this country, crossing every single political stripe telling them that he has made a mistake but who refuses to listen.

The Prime Minister and his government are not merely being stubborn or stupid in their decision. The Prime Minister and his government are being arrogant. They are turning away from the future, turning away from our roots the ribbon of steel that built this country and they are turning away from the ribbon of steel that can expand this country going into the future. They are taking us backwards. In so doing, this Prime Minister has said that he shall rely in future upon the tyranny of a majority in Parliament and will no longer hear the voice of people. We cannot accept that, Canadians cannot accept that and we shall continue the fight for the future of VIA Rail and for the future of rail passenger service in this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Questions or comments? I do understand that the hon. member wants to share the 20 minutes. I also thought that consequently, there would be a five minute question and comment period following each of the hon. members' speeches. Is that agreed?

Mr. Tobin: Madam Speaker, with the consent of members and if there is consent and, of course, consent by Madam Speaker, we might hear from the second member and there would be a question and answer period at the end. I am certainly not going anywhere, if that would facilitate the opportunity for as many members as possible to speak in this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Chair is quite prepared to go along with the hon. member's suggestion, even though there was one thing that seemed to stand in my mind. The questions or the comments would have to come after the last speaker's speech. Henceforth, I think there should be at this point a five-minute question period on the last speaker's intervention and then after the next speaker's intervention. I think everyone has understood what I meant to say.