

Private Members' Business

able to accomplish more with our opportunity and save our line by making it more economically viable for private industry.

However, I do not know how much more can be done in the case of the rail line advocated by motion 194. Private and public investors have had since 1989 to revamp and reinvest in the line and return it to profitability. This has not been done.

I do sympathize with the hon. member's motion but unfortunately I simply do not believe there are any simple solutions to be gained from motion 194.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Wellington—Waterloo): Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to address this House in French. After only six weeks of French classes, I know I still make mistakes. I agree with the member for Roberval.

[*English*]

CNR, CPR and VIA serve Canada.

It is easy for the member for Kootenay West to get up and reject outright the thesis of the member for Roberval when he is harboured by the Western Grain Transportation Act. They get underwriting which is a subsidy that is not able to be taken by the member for Roberval's CNR track. There is also the Crows Nest Pass and I can go on and on.

This whole thing is why I support the member for Roberval. CNR, CPR and VIA pick off whatever line they like each year until all they have left are very few Canadians who have access to public transportation which has been enormously supported since Confederation; billions and billions of dollars have gone into CPR and CNR, particularly in the west.

Please, enough of throwing mud at each other. Let us work together for a national rail strategy that will serve Canada in the 21st century and not leave one section out to the benefit of another.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Madam Speaker, I feel compelled to take part in this debate today and support the motion put forward by the hon. member for Roberval since my riding of Cochrane—Superior, like many other rural ridings across Canada, is experiencing the very same problems.

First of all, we have to remind CN that its primary mandate is to promote regional development by ensuring the operation of rail lines across the country so that remote areas in particular can develop economically and have access to urban communities in Canada.

I find it extremely unfortunate that CN has adopted such a policy over the last few years. We who live in rural areas of this

country are beginning to feel abandoned. We are seeing our chances of becoming self-sufficient diminish.

Even though CN wants to abandon rail lines, the National Transportation Agency could intervene to save them, if only it to ensure the future development of our regions.

A few moments ago, I talked about people feeling isolated. Once rail is gone, what are you going to replace it with? Whether we use a bus, a truck or anything else, it will still cost money.

I repeat and maintain that CN has responsibilities to isolated areas and to its employees; it has a moral duty to ensure that all regions of the country have a chance to develop. Dismantling unprofitable branch lines is no way for CN to fulfil its mandate. Absolutely not.

I strongly disagree with what my colleague from Carleton—Gloucester was saying a while ago. At this stage I would like to make a very important digression.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bélair: I am astounded, to say the least, when I see members from urban areas, who have probably never seen a rural rail line, rise in this House to denounce or deny support for the concerns of their rural colleagues.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for granting me this opportunity to voice my concern.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): You still have some time left.

Mr. Bélair: Thank you, but I said what I had to say.

• (1425)

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière): Madam Speaker, hearing the member for Carleton—Gloucester on the profitability of the trunk line, which my colleague from Roberval wants to save from destruction, from being scrapped, I was reminded that some people have never travelled to the regions. Some people have never seen what an isolated region of Canada is.

I am from the Saguenay—Lac—Saint—Jean region where the Chibougamau—Chapais area is located and I can tell you that this region is 150 years old. The first settlers used axes and two-handed saws to clear the land in the hope of finding some future north of Quebec City. These people worked like slaves and never stopped fighting to open up the area to the rest of the world and to get means of transportation. They fought to obtain a road from Charlevoix to Chicoutimi. They fought for a rail line from Quebec City to Chicoutimi and Roberval. They fought for the Chibougamau road and for a road from Chicoutimi to Sacré—Coeur on the North Shore. More recently, they fought for the road to the Far North which gives us access to the development of the great dams being built in northern Quebec.