

Supply

round logs from overseas markets than locally. It is doing it regularly. We have no control, no influence over that in the Province of British Columbia.

It still owns all the mineral rights, with the exception of the coal and fire clay rights. What are they worth? Who knows. Some drilling was done for gas in the area some three or four years ago by British Petroleum which does not usually go in just for the fun of it. It does not usually invest a couple of million dollars just to practise. It has not told us what was found, if anything. Whatever it did find the wells have been capped and left. We do not know what is going on there. Certainly there must have been some substantial evidence that there is gas at least in the area, or British Petroleum would not have been in there drilling.

It owns the transportation system. It is not the taxpayers that owe something to the people of British Columbia. It is not the taxpayers that owe something to the residents of Vancouver Island or the people generally who want to maintain E and N Railway as a passenger service.

• (1510)

It is the responsibility of this government to make sure that the present owners of all those assets live up to the original contract they assumed when they took over the Dunsmuir interests and make sure that we keep the passenger rail service or, as an alternative, turn over to the taxpayers of British Columbia all the remaining assets that were given to them at the time.

I think we can afford to write off everything we have given them up to this point. Let us get back everything that is left. We will be more than able to afford to maintain a passenger service on Vancouver Island and do much more besides.

Mr. Lyle Kristiansen (Kootenay West—Revelstoke):
Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to rise to support the motion of the Official Opposition which reads:

That this House approves the recommendation contained in the second report of the Standing Committee on Transport, calling for a moratorium in the government's proposed cuts to VIA Rail.

As the member of Parliament for Kootenay West—Revelstoke and also on behalf of my colleague, the member for Kootenay East, we have been spending a considerable period of time since the minister's an-

nouncement of these cuts attempting to salvage what we can of The Canadian line that runs along the Kamloops—Calgary corridor and with very good reason.

That particular corridor is one of the most heavily utilized in the transcontinental system with the best cost recoveries of almost any rail section in the country, apart from areas within the Golden Horseshoe. It has a valid claim not only on economic grounds, but the minister is making a major pitch for economic restraint and the need to reduce the deficit. We are perhaps one of the more profitable sections of the VIA Rail system in the country and one of the more heavily utilized.

It is interesting to note that The Canadian line carried some 539,000 passengers, up from 465,000 in 1987. The Canadian line has been closed. The Super Continental carried 174,000 passengers, up from 159,000 in 1987. The Super Continental has been kept operating albeit on a reduced basis.

No one, especially myself being a member who comes from an area that is in many ways rather remote and isolated with particular transportation problems, wants to suggest that we rob Peter to pay Paul. If the minister is making one of major grounds for his arguments economics, then he should look at his own figures.

On October 6, 1989, as reported in *Hansard*, I asked the Minister of Transport in pointing out some of those discrepancies how he could justify that discrimination and whether he would agree to postpone and review his total abandonment of the communities along the Kamloops—Calgary corridor.

The minister, in responding, left the door open a crack. We are certainly doing all we can to take him up on that. He said:

On the southern route there are other modes of transportation available. Otherwise, it would be considered a remote area and we would provide the service.

He goes on to set out a couple of other conditions which we can easily meet to show that he would be willing to discuss in particular the arguments presented by the communities along that line.

The minister received, as did I, a fax late yesterday or this morning from the manager of the chamber of commerce in the city of Revelstoke. There is a meeting to be held in the village of Golden on the 16th of this month. They have asked the minister—and that is a little