

VIA RAIL

CONTINUED GOVERNMENT SUPPORT URGED

Mr. Greg Thompson (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, four and one-half years ago our Government came to power with a commitment to improve the quality of passenger rail service after it had been slashed under the previous Liberal Government. We honoured that commitment.

Many people in Atlantic Canada who live in small rural communities far from airports consequently have come to rely on VIA Rail as their major source of transportation to the rest of the nation.

In addition, the closing of VIA Rail in New Brunswick would place increased pressure on our already over-burdened Trans-Canada Highway system. Economically the bottom line in Atlantic Canada is that over 500 jobs will be lost if VIA Rail is dismantled.

I therefore urge the Government to continue its strong support for VIA Rail and give the company the autonomy it needs to become cost efficient and competitive.

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FISHERIES

NEWFOUNDLAND—FRENCH QUOTA

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, we now know that the Government has agreed to allow French fishermen to overfish in Canadian waters for a three year period in return for an agreement to settle the Canada-France dispute over the south coast of Newfoundland.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have also been told that their former Fisheries Minister and newly anointed Premier is outraged at this action. The Premier wants to make it seem that he was not kept fully advised by the federal Government, that he was not on top of this issue. Perhaps this is yet again an example of the Government not keeping concerned provinces informed about issues affecting them.

Yesterday's Throne Speech waxed on about Canadians who fish for a living and are finding their catches reduced by predatory overfishing. How can the Government allow French overfishing in our waters while saying the opposite in the Throne Speech?

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should be wondering why their Government has allowed French overfishing while seeing their total allowable catch reduced.

S. O. 31

THE ECONOMY

EFFECT OF NATIONAL DEBT INTEREST CHARGES

Mr. Ken G. Hughes (MacLeod): Mr. Speaker, a full 31 per cent of federal government revenue now goes to pay interest on our national debt. Even if we were to keep our annual deficit at current levels, the total debt would continue to grow.

Where would we stop? Should we wait until we are paying more than 50 per cent of our revenues for interest costs as Members opposite might suggest?

No, Mr. Speaker. Now is the time to face the music.

In my riding of MacLeod, consumers, homeowners, farmers, ranchers and others all pay higher interest rates in part because of the huge national debt. Since 1984 our Government has started to turn things around.

No family can live beyond its means, nor can any Government.

Canadians from all walks of life must work together to face this challenge.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

GREECE—INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt): Mr. Speaker I would like to take this opportunity to recognize formally the Independence Day of the country of Greece which is observed throughout the world by people of Hellenic origin and ancestry. On March 25 of this year, Greece celebrated its 168 years of independence from 400 years of oppression by the Ottoman Empire.

While the number of years that Greece has claimed independence is short, the legacy which its rich history imparts to the world is very long indeed. If we are gathered here today in this Parliament which forms the core of the democratic principles which we hold so dear, it is because the scholars and ordinary citizens of ancient Greece struggled so passionately to give birth to a system which we can now accept as our supreme right as citizens of Canada.

Lest we lose sight of the fact that the state of Greece is the cradle of western civilization, it is only fitting that we take this moment to acknowledge the anniversary of Greek independence.