

Supply

I must remind the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan that this party, the Liberal Party, is made up of new, dedicated, hard working members of Parliament who had nothing to say or do with the previous policy of the previous administration. I want to emphasize that by bringing forward a report released today, a report of the federal Liberal task force on VIA Rail of which I was proud to be a part. In its conclusion it states:

It is not enough to say that we support the VIA Rail system as it currently exists. We believe that VIA Rail has the potential to serve this country without being a continual drain on the resources of the government.

That may in part also answer some of the queries from the member opposite, the member for Fraser Valley East. It continues:

However, this can only be achieved if we have the foresight to invest now in a capital expenditure program to modernize the entire VIA Rail system.

That is to have the vision, to have the foresight, to look ahead. The report goes on:

It is also important to allow the management of VIA Rail the flexibility and responsibility to make business decisions concerning the future of the company. We do realize that this Crown corporation must function within a public policy framework, but, just as responsibility for political decisions must rest with the government, the responsibility for business decisions must rest with the management. Presumably the management was hired to do a job; the government should let them do it.

The Liberal Party task force on VIA Rail went through the process of listening to Canadians. We have done our best to reflect the aspirations that people have concerning our national rail passenger service in this document.

Also, one point that touches a nerve is the situation on the environment. The government likes to talk about the environment and its environmental record, but it is only lip service.

• (1730)

By removing 51 per cent of the trains, taking them off the map of Canada, we are putting more strain and diverting passengers who used to use the train to buses and automobiles, those vehicles which supply this environment with that deadly product, carbon dioxide. Noted environmentalists, including Dr. David Suzuki have said that if for any reason we have to put additional CO₂ into our atmosphere it is wrong. That is why we call for the moratorium. Let us just take one step back. Let us have a listen to the people, to the mayors, to the premiers and to the environmentalists. Because only a true environmental study in its full capacity, not something cooked

up by the Department of Transport but by the Minister of the Environment—

Mr. Benjamin: What is the question?

Mr. Keyes: It is a comment—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I may have to stop the hon. member. I must say I have a difficult time seeing the relevancy of the hon. gentleman's comments in terms of the intervention just made by the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan. However, he still may want to comment.

Mr. Angus: Madam Speaker, I have not heard revisionism like that since the recent events in the eastern bloc. The sins of the fathers are handed down to the sons. There are members of the hon. member's caucus who were around when those cuts were made and who are now front-benchers. One has to accept the reality that in opposition Liberals say one thing and in government they do the opposite.

Mr. Benjamin: You are stuck with it, buster. It's going to haunt you for years.

Mr. Dionne: Madam Speaker, if I could get the hon. member from the NDP to pipe down, I would make a few remarks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dionne: In 1981 we, as a government, made a mistake when we cut VIA Rail by 19 per cent.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I will have to interrupt the hon. member. There was still some time left for questions and comments. Was the hon. member rising on debate?

Mr. Dionne: On debate, yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I will have to recognize someone from the government side on debate. It was on questions or comments that I recognized the hon. member.

Is the hon. member for Restigouche—Chaleur rising on a question or a comment?

Mr. Arseneault: Yes, Madam Speaker. I just want to make a few quick comments.

It has been said in the House many times by government members that the government has no funds. If it had funds, we would probably have VIA Rail and there would be no problem. I wish to point out to government members, including the Minister of Transport, that in estimates made by the Minister of Finance, if the government took one percentage point off the interest rates, there would be a saving of \$1.6 billion in one year.