

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I have been a member of this Cabinet since 1984 and with very great pride. Since 1984 we have had to cope with a deficit that we inherited from a Government which played a major part in the development of that deficit long before 1984.

Mr. Allmand: That is why you made \$17 billion in promises.

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): The Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) is one of the most experienced former Ministers of the former Government. He knows very well how his Government wasted the people's money from 1970 on, but particularly in 1984.

I said in my speech that the 1970s were the years of abundance. Money was spread everywhere without for one minute having in mind what would happen after that period of time. What we faced in 1984 was a \$38 million deficit which had to be reduced. It has been reduced and that is the bottom line.

In four years, the Liberal Party created a debt of about \$225 billion. We tried to reduce it and we have succeeded. But it is obvious that we could not cure all the illnesses that the former Government created over 15 or 20 years.

The Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce knows, because he was in this House of Commons as I was, that almost every day, every week since 1984, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) or other Ministers have raised the problem of the deficit which we have been able to lower.

Mr. Allmand: It was \$17 billion in promises.

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): That is why Canadians made their decision on November 21. They knew what we did. They knew what the Liberals did previously. That is why we are still on this side of the House. I think you have your answer, Mr. Speaker. Canadians had confidence in 1984 and 1988 because they believed that what we did then we will continue to do. We will carry on. When we look at the reality of today we see it is a tough, responsible Budget. We do not look back at yesterday. We need people for today and tomorrow.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Bouchard) and his three predecessors made state-

ments about providing VIA Rail with new locomotives which they have done, and new rolling stock which would put VIA Rail in a position of cost recovery and reduce its dependency on the national treasury by \$300 million to \$400 million a year. He and his three incompetent predecessors have spent more money fixing up old passenger cars than what it would cost to purchase new ones. When will the Minister put an end to that nonsense and exercise some sound business practices in the operation of VIA Rail?

Mr. Milliken: After they close it down.

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, this Government and the previous Government have spent \$5.4 billion since 1977.

Mr. Benjamin: Good money after bad.

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): I listened to the Member, I hope he will listen to me. Since 1984 we have added \$1.2 billion and \$600 million in capital to that. We face the same prospect in 1989 as we did in 1984. The question is not what kind of service we give first but what amount of money we can afford to spend on a mode of transportation which only 3 per cent of Canadians use. We have a limited budget. The Member knows that. The NDP always have money to spend, because it is not expensive for them. We told people we had an explosion in air travel and many other modes of transport but not in passenger rail transportation. Six million Canadians have travelled. Twenty-five per cent of all money expended is on air service compared with 3 per cent of Canadians using rail passenger service. We have to face the reality of today and decide on the most effective way of spending the money allocated in the Budget for the DOT. We will spend \$541 million, \$435 million, \$395 million, \$275 million and \$250 million on rail passenger service over the next five years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Assad: Mr. Speaker, my comments are directed to the Minister of Transport. I would like to raise a local issue, and I am referring to Western Québec. I am aware that there has been a lot of correspondence between the Minister and the Québec Minister of Transport. Even his own colleague—she agrees with me—even his own colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau (Mrs. Bourgault)