

mediator will be successful. I know we all wish him well in his very challenging task because we all recognize—and I am sure I speak for all members of the House—that postal service is very fundamental and basic to our country. It positively has to be considered an essential service, because when postal service stops our country suffers very, very much.

We are faced with a motion of closure to adjourn the House. Closure has been used on five different occasions in this House, but this is the first time it has ever been used to adjourn the House. This is unprecedented in Canadian history and, I suspect, in the history of the Commonwealth.

At the very outset I must say that I abhor this tactic. I find it offensive. I find it repugnant because it strikes at the basic fabric of our parliamentary democracy. Instead of having a parliamentary democracy, we have what resembles a parliamentary dictatorship. It concerns me very much that government members tend to gloss over this so lightly and that hon. members opposite are questioning the institution of Parliament and the institution of our parliamentary democracy as we know it.

I started out by saying that there are very important issues facing this country in addition to the Post Office crisis. There are serious economic issues including high interest rates, inflationary pressure and pressure on the Canadian dollar. There is economic depression in various parts of the country. To respond to my good friend, the hon. member for Rimouski, I must tell her that these are not insignificant matters. These are very important matters which affect every individual Canadian from coast to coast.

Much of the problem with which we are faced today has been contributed to by the failure of this government to negotiate an oil pricing agreement with the province of Alberta. The government has been in office for more than 16 months and we are really no closer to an oil agreement today than we were when the government assumed office. I find that very irresponsible and I will have more to say about it a little later on in my remarks.

● (1830)

The speakers on this side of the House have certainly raised many questions today about the uranium cartel, but we have not received satisfactory answers. The government is looking bad on this issue. It has every appearance of a major cover up. The government refuses to come clean and expose the documentation which it says justifies the actions it is taking. The exchanges which have taken place and the speeches made in the House only arouse more suspicion. Canadians are suspicious, and I think the whole matter smells.

Another important area which will affect many Canadians is the government's proposal to reduce rail passenger service in the country by approximately 20 per cent. This has very grave implications for many Canadians in many communities. It bothers me that the government seems hell-bent on making this announcement at a time when the House will not be in session.

### *Summer Recess*

I can only suggest that this action is cowardly and deceptive. The government will embark upon a very unusual practice. I am not suggesting that it has not been used before, but it will perform massive surgery on the rail passenger service without giving Canadians an opportunity to be heard and without giving them any recourse. The government will circumvent the regulatory process as well as the traditional and historic methods of doing things.

When I speak of "traditional and historic methods", I bring to the attention of the House that we are all aware VIA Rail was established under a dollar vote in the estimates and that it has not been properly constituted in the parliamentary sense. It forms the basis of report No. 12 of the Standing Joint Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments which is contained in *Votes and Proceedings*. It is the continuation of an early report which read in part:

The making of extensive subordinate laws on important matters such as VIA Rail Canada Inc., under votes in Appropriation Acts also produces laws and policies never debated by Parliament. Your committee's predecessor called for an end to this practice inimical to parliamentary sovereignty. It should stop and all existing subordinate laws made under Votes should be the subject of review as to merits by the appropriate Parliamentary Committees.

To follow up on that, the joint chairmen of the standing committee have been in constant correspondence with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) urging him to ratify in a parliamentary sense that which was done improperly through the estimates by bringing forth the VIA Rail Canada act so that the objectives, the mandate, the merits, the regulatory process, and all the pros and cons of VIA Rail could be debated properly before the House. We have a situation where a corporation charged with the task of providing rail passenger service will now have the rug pulled out from under it by a unilateral act, by a government edict which will reduce rail passenger service.

The other day the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) talked about parliamentary reform. If he wanted to give credence to his good intentions, he would begin by obeying the directions of the joint committee and by urging the Minister of Transport to bring forth a bill to ratify VIA Rail Canada in a proper fashion.

Before embarking upon the massive surgery of the rail passenger service which is contemplated, it seems to me that the minister should consider seriously a deferral of it until the VIA Rail Canada act is brought before the House so that we can debate its mandate and objectives. I call upon the President of the Privy Council to use his good offices to recommend to the Minister of Transport that this be done.

We do not know the rationale or the basis upon which the rationalization will take place. As for the proposed discontinuance of the Supercontinental Winnipeg-Vancouver line which goes through Edmonton, we really do not know upon what basis the decision will be made. I think an article in *The Edmonton Sun* put it in proper perspective:

The generally accepted rule governing the continuation of any public passenger service is that the communities it serves must either use it or lose it.