

Supply

commitment to preserve service to remote areas. Presumably, remote areas mean places which are not served by any other mode of transportation.

As I think the minister is aware, there are communities between Winnipeg and Farlane, Ontario, which can only be reached by rail and they are served, according to the minister's plans now, only by the Transcontinental service which will run over the Winnipeg-Capreol line. Not only does this train leave at times which are completely out of whack with times when people may want to go to their cottages, but there is also some question as to whether or not you would want a Transcontinental train to be stopping at all of those places anyway. I understand from a media article that the minister was going to give this problem his attention to see if some special arrangement could be made, at least in the summertime, to get these people to their camps and back to where they have had investments over many generations.

I would like to know from the minister where that process is at. Has he had a chance to look at it? What is the state of his thinking on that matter?

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Yes, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, as I said to Mr. Driedger from Manitoba, that matter is still under review. It is a very particular case. People use that train to go to their cottages for the weekend. It is really particular because it is not in the spirit of what we call remote services. I agreed at the request of the minister to take a look at it. It was still under review at the department, either last week or the week before. I have not yet received the report.

• (1330)

Once again, it is very particular. It is basically a leisure service because people are going to their cottages. On that basis, it has to be seen in the perspective of all Canada. If three, four, five or six other services might have to be cut, it has to be seen in that perspective. The answer will come up later, because it has not as yet been treated by the department.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina—Lumsden): Mr. Speaker, I have been a member of the House for 21 years and for 21 consecutive years a member of the transport committee. The minister is the twelfth or thirteenth minister during those years. Throughout the whole time I have been

surrounded by amateurs and ignorance when it comes to transportation. With my years on the railway, together with those of my father and grandfather, and the 21 years with the transport committee, I think I know a bit about it. I do not pose as an expert, by any means.

The minister referred early in his remarks to Amtrak and how it cut so many routes in 1971. Amtrak cut all the duplicate routes, two or three lines running to New York, to Chicago, from Chicago to Detroit, from Chicago to Los Angeles or Seattle, down to one line. That is exactly what was done by VIA in 1977-78. There was no use having two parallel railway lines, duplicating a service. It made transportation sense economically and it ended duplication. It also saved a lot of money. The specious comparison put forward by the minister does not stand up. It never has.

The cuts in VIA Rail according to the minister and the Minister of Finance will save money. Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat. The cuts in VIA Rail in 1981-82 cost the government more and cost VIA Rail more than what the savings were, and that was only a 21 per cent cut. It is not that they just do not understand; they do not care.

There is the travesty of the Department of Finance doing the studies for reference levels of subsidy for VIA Rail. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker: Where in hell was the minister of Transport? We have asked. In fact questions went on the order paper about those studies, but they were not done by transport; they were done by the Department of Finance.

When it came to environment there were two farces. Who did the study for the Department of the Environment? The Department of Transport. My question is: Where was the Minister of the Environment? Let us look at that so-called environmental study. It dignifies it to use the word "study". It is not a study; it is another farce. It does not hold any water at all for anyone, expert or non-expert on environmental impact.

The government and its adherents for all these years have advocated sound business practices. One sound practice in business is that if you go into business or you are continue in business you have to operate not only efficiently and with high productivity. You also have to operate with the latest and most modern equipment.