

Montreal, were committed to abolishing tolls on the Champlain Bridge. Yesterday in the House, the Minister of State for Transport (Mr. Bouchard) went so far as to contradict his colleague from La Prairie (Mr. Jourdenais). Yet, during the election campaign, the candidate from La Prairie had been saying: This is ridiculous, the Liberals are totally ignorant of what the people on the South Shore need. We are going to close the tolls on the Champlain Bridge. We are going to follow the example set by the Government of Quebec when it removed tolls on the Autoroute des Cantons de l'Est and the Autoroute du Nord. And after making these solemn promises, Mr. Speaker, and saying on television in front of all Canadians that this was not just a personal commitment on the part of the candidate from La Prairie but a commitment by the Progressive Conservative Party yesterday, the Minister of State for Transport rose in the House and said that well, six million dollars is too much to spend on the people of the South Shore. Let them be discriminated against and let them go on paying the toll.

That was not the tune they were singing during the election campaign. Another commitment out the window, another promise broken. Now he says: Well, maybe when the economic situation improves. In other words, don't hold your breath.

Mr. Speaker, this has been going on since this Government was sworn in. During the election campaign, that great Montrealer, who is now the Leader of the Government, said that Montreal must once again become Canada's metropolis. He said that at Place Ville Marie. Two weeks after his swearing in, he had to decide whether to keep an office in Montreal or move it elsewhere, what did he do? Montreal's role as a metropolis and the commitment made at Place Ville-Marie were forgotten and it was decided to move the Canadian Aviation Safety Board to Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Hull-Aylmer (Mr. Isabelle) would be very pleased with this decision, but the truth of the matter is that this Minister who claims to be in favour of consultation and to practice party solidarity, this same Minister made this decision without consulting the main parties concerned, although he claims he did. However, we have been informed by some important people in Montreal, by groups that are concerned about Montreal's future, that they were not consulted before the decision was made.

Mr. Speaker, in the field of transport, promises are becoming more and more . . . the Minister of State for Transport is here, and I am glad to see that, because not long ago he was in my riding, supposedly to engage in ministerial consultations. Ministerial consultations my eye, Mr. Speaker! The Minister of State for Transport sent invitations only to Progressive Conservative Members. I do hope that expenses were paid by the Progressive Conservative caucus because the Member for Richmond-Wolfe (Mr. Tardif) and the Member for Shefford had something to say to the Minister of State for Transport. We had regional problems to submit to him and we were

convinced that, this being a supposedly ministerial consultation, all interested people would be convened regardless of their political affiliation. They claim that their consultations are at the Minister's level, Mr. Speaker, but they were consulting the caucus, period.

An Hon. Member: As the Péquistes used to do.

Mr. Lapierre: But look at what he did. Mr. Speaker, you will realize just how strangely that caucus can behave.

Naturally the Member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Charest) had convinced his caucus to support the VIA Rail service. Never mind everybody, he said the day after: We will form the new government.

● (1510)

Not to worry, VIA Rail will be back in business and people will still see those trains crossing the Eastern Townships.

The budget has been slashed, Mr. Speaker, but that did not prevent the Minister of State for Transport (Mr. Bouchard) from stating, as reported in the *Tribune* of Thursday, October 25:

VIA Rail services will be restored.

Mr. Speaker, that statement appeared in the paper.

An Hon. Member: He speaks the same language as the Péquistes.

Mr. Lapierre: Since the Minister made that solemn commitment and claimed that he would honour his election promise, everybody in the region has been saying: Finally, they have lived up to their promise. But today, Mr. Speaker, the people realize that they were mistaken, as they were in the case of most other promises, because they were sure that services would be restored. The government is not so sure anymore, and that is why a month later, on November 19, it decided to set up a task force on rail passenger services. Should the task force ever come to the conclusion that services ought not to be restored, neither the Minister nor the government will bear the blame, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Blame the others.

Mr. Lapierre: But in spite of all that . . . You know, Mr. Speaker, if this government keeps bending backwards it will break its back. In all cases where they had firm commitments, they are conducting studies and keep saying they are consulting people. In my opinion, the people of Quebec will realize that, generally speaking, the election promises were only a smoke-screen. The people of the South Shore heard this confirmed yesterday by the Minister himself. People in the Eastern Townships also knew it because of the statements which were made subsequently. I note, for instance, that the press release is in the name of the Minister of Transport. In fact, the senior Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) may want to deny the statement made by the Minister of State