

*Borrowing Authority*

When there was building to be done in the country such as large projects in various regions, we got ourselves closer to national prosperity than we have ever had since, certainly since the 1960s. There was a recognition by Governments in those days that they had a responsibility. It was not that private enterprise was wrong or bad or anything of the sort. It was quite to the contrary, especially as expressed by the St. Laurent Government of those days. There was a recognition of the importance of resource companies and their role in the Canadian economy. That is obvious from the history of the period. There was a recognition out of the experience of the Great Depression and the war years that although corporations could do a great deal, and the market pointed to certain kinds of investments, there were measures that the Government of Canada needed to take and that it ought to get on with taking them. There was certainly a recognition in the 1940s that to do that would provide full employment for Canada. It was recognized that it would bring the country prosperity in a way that it had not known since the 1920s, or as it had known during the war years when the Government led in ensuring that production was built up in order to meet war needs.

A few moments ago the Parliamentary Secretary was talking about regional unemployment rates in the various provinces. It is worth recognizing the importance of a program of this sort. Of course unemployment rates are lower in many provinces than they were in 1984. By God, what else could we expect? In 1984 we were just coming out of the interest rate depression of the early 1980s. One would expect that, with reasonable interest rates and with construction picking up, of course the unemployment rates would be lower than they were in 1984. The fact of the matter is that in eight of the ten provinces there is nothing to brag about even now. It is great effrontery for Members of the Government to mention this, something which was well-skewed a few moments ago when our colleague from Cape Breton pointed out the experience of people in his own constituency as far as unemployment is concerned.

With respect to unemployment and the lack of prosperity, there has to be the recognition that the Government could do a great deal to ensure that prosperity returns to these regions and we could get closer to a full employment level. When we get closer to full employment we want to be assured that the tax system is such that the Budget is balanced. When the Budget is balanced we might even have the resources at some point to reduce the national debt rather than being obsessed as this Government has been with deficit reduction first and foremost.

What are examples of projects that should be carried out to meet national needs? I expect that other Members may have caught some parts of *Cross Country Check-Up* yesterday afternoon with the President of VIA Rail in the studio. Canadians from across the country phoned in to express in most cases their love of rail travel and their desire to have rail transportation improved. There was discussion about fast rail lines far beyond the capability of VIA Rail now with its

outmoded rolling stock and with the poor rail lines, relatively speaking, for these purposes. It is a quality of rolling stock that my friend from Regina West focused on very nicely in his own observations when he called in to the show.

• (1600)

I was struck by the suggestion of what could be done with trains that run at 180 or more kilometres per hour. These are speeds which have been attained in France and will be attained soon in other parts of Europe, speeds which have been exceeded by trains in Japan. It is obvious that it would be attractive to many to achieve that kind of rail travel in Canada. Many people would prefer rail travel to road travel or even to air travel.

It is obvious that to achieve that kind of rail transportation system would be a pretty expensive proposition. Here, of course, is an area in which the Government of Canada might choose to invest. The suggestion that really caught my ear was the suggestion of a rail line between Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto and Windsor. Such a line would be a good idea not only in terms of travel needs but also in terms of profitability.

The President of VIA Rail has suggested that such a line would pay for itself. There might be a need for a grant at the beginning, I suppose, to get it going, but if such a line were to be a viable commercial enterprise, I find myself asking how fast we could get the studies done to confirm that and how fast we could turn sod to build this line. If it could be a paying commercial operation, let us get on with the job already, recognizing that such a line built from Windsor all the way to Quebec City would provide employment all along the line, through areas in which such jobs are very badly needed.

A rapid rail line in the central Canadian corridor is an example of something the Government could undertake. It is a good idea which could conceivably be financed quite separately from the borrowings of the federal Government. It would play the role of using the borrowing authority of the Canadian Government and/or VIA Rail together to achieve good things for the Canadian people.

I have another area of concern, also in transportation, as it happens. It might well take up to \$3 billion, or at least that is the estimate the Ontario Government has put forward, but there is a need for improvement of the Trans-Canada Highway through northern Ontario. This is another project of regional significance and of national significance. In my constituency of Thunder Bay—Nipigon, there is a section of highway exceeding 100 kilometres in length which is the road link between East and West in Canada. There is a bridge at the east end of that road across the Nipigon River which, if it were ever to go out, would cut off all transportations across Canada. People would have to travel around the south side of the Great Lakes. Of course, there are sections of the road which have been closed for short periods of time, cutting off transportation, even in the brief time I have been a Member of Parliament.