

*Supply**[Translation]*

Mr. Caron: Mr. Speaker, it is not about pouring money into Quebec but about pouring money into railway transportation in Canada, because we believe it is an efficient way to transport passengers and freight.

The hon. member takes the accountant's perspective and talks about viability, but we suppose we look at Canada the same way and ask whether Canada is a viable proposition? Every day our Reform Party colleagues tell us that the debt is increasing and that we are on the verge of bankruptcy, and in that case, since Canada is not viable, why not close it? I say this tongue in cheek, and the hon. member knows perfectly well it is not that simple.

A country is supposed to provide certain public services to its citizens, including education, hospitals, roads and the army, and it has to raise taxes and allow for a minimum of administration, all of which, if considered from a very short-term perspective, could be said to be unprofitable. For instance, is the hospital in Jonquière profitable? I have the impression it costs a lot more than what people pay for the care they get.

So one option would be to privatize. But if we privatize hospitals, schools, roads, the army, prisons, and so forth, we will get to the point that we privatize the government, and there will be no more government, no more country and no more State.

I think we should carefully consider all the consequences. We should also look at history, and we will realize that since time immemorial, public services have been subsidized by the State, and that is why the State exists, so it can provide this public service, and we believe that in Canada, transportation, including highway transportation and railway transportation, which is a part of all this, is also a public service and that citizens, considering the taxes they pay, have a right to expect satisfactory service.

[English]

Mr. Harris: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the members of the Bloc just do not get the truth of this whole thing. Canada is almost flat broke, if not already there. We have a \$535 billion debt. We are operating \$40 billion in the hole a year. There is no money for increasing services. The only way that can possibly be done at this stage is to increase taxes. Quite frankly, this is not a viable option. The Canadian people and Canadian businesses are taxed to death. They cannot take any more tax hits.

If we do not get our finances under control, if we do not get our deficit under control, if we do not start attacking the debt, Canada is going to hit the wall. All these services, the transportation services, hospital services, the infrastructure that the

Bloc members are talking about are simply going to be gone, period.

This is a time when Canada has to clearly distinguish its wants from its needs. What we need is what we can afford to pay for; what we want is not what we can afford to pay for. The Bloc is talking about wants. The wants side of the thing should not even be on the agenda today, considering our financial position.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mr. Caron: Mr. Speaker, when you look at a country, you may look at its debt, but you must also consider its assets. Is Canada worth more than our present debt of \$500 billion? If it is not worth more than that, obviously, we are going to disappear. But if you look at what Canada is really worth, with all its assets, its production, its natural resources, its people, if you add it all up and compare it to the debt, I believe that the difference is quite significant. My colleague will agree that to look at the debt without looking at the assets, is a bit short of good accounting practices.

With this, I will conclude, Mr. Speaker, that you must look at the assets instead of looking only at the debt.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague for his excellent analysis and especially for having explained to the Reformers, who simply do not understand anything, that there is a difference between an asset and an expense.

When you have a productive asset, which will remain productive in the long term if you keep investing in it, in an area in development at the international level, like a railway system, anyone can understand that one day it will make the country richer. In other words it is possible to increase the wealth of a country and control spending by developing assets.

If we listened to the members of the Reform Party, with whom I work every day in the finance committee, we would empty nine tenths of Canada to fill the remaining tenth, because nothing is viable in their opinion. If nothing is viable, I wonder why they remain a federalist party. The country has to be dismantled. If they do not believe in the country as it is, why do they stay in politics? Are they here to improve the situation or to be accomplices to a systematic demolition? When it is not the railway system which is under attack, it is social programs. They started with unemployment insurance, then post-secondary education and health. If that is politics for them, hats off!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): A brief comment from the hon. member for Jonquière.