

Transportation Accident Investigation Board

on the altar of the bottom line, for what we consider in New Brunswick as a vital transportation link all across this country. We feel that VIA Rail should be strengthened, that more money should be invested in that operation, and that improvements should be made with respect to the outmoded equipment that is presently being utilized by VIA. If that were done, we feel we would not face the necessity of investigation upon investigation of rail crashes and accidents, and the risk to people who travel with VIA. We are also concerned when we hear that there are to be cut-backs in grants and support to provinces.

For example, the freight rate subsidy is one question to which we could not get a clear answer from the Minister today in Question Period. If those subsidies are cut, if that support mechanism is in fact removed or lessened, that will have a very serious impact on the Canadian National Railway, a very large employer in my riding. We are concerned again that if CN is cut back and they do not have the revenue and the support mechanisms in place, they as well will be forced not to be as safety conscious and the board that we are discussing in Bill C-2 will have to be investigating more and more accidents.

We are concerned as well when the Government will not come forward and provide the necessary assistance to a province like New Brunswick, a province with the worst Trans-Canada Highway in Canada. That again is an example where if you allow the infrastructure to deteriorate and go to pieces, like our Trans-Canada Highway has, very unsafe conditions will result. We have frequent accidents on our Trans-Canada Highway, and most of them have been attributed by experts to be caused by the lack of upgrading and proper Trans-Canada facilities in our province. If there are cuts in the directions that have been clearly indicated by the Government, then this board is going to be investigating more and more safety-associated accidents.

We are going to have more rail accidents. We are going to have more passenger train accidents. We are going to have more air accidents, all because in our view there are greater pressures being put on air infrastructure, on road infrastructure, and on rail infrastructure. We applaud the general direction of this Bill. We are supportive in that regard. However, we are concerned that the Gov-

ernment is going too quickly and that it has not thought through exactly what should take place. We urge the Government to ensure that there is a strong board made up of strong independent members and that there are the resources necessary made available to this Board so that it can do the job and do it properly.

• (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Are there questions or comments?

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Madam Speaker, will the Hon. Member confirm that his major concern is that the Government is creating an accident investigation Board today while at the same time, because of a number of the Government's failures, it is creating an enormous safety hazard.

The Hon. Member for Moncton (Mr. Rideout) mentioned that budget cuts and Public Service cuts were two major concerns. He said that the same is true for an ill-conceived cost recovery program and that the enormous cost of aviation is removing the ability of many people to afford upgrading safety systems while paying higher parking rates and more for radio licences.

The Government has taken action by increasing taxes on aviation fuel. This has moved the price out of reach, as well as the supplies. Yet at the same time the Government has failed to permit wider use of motor fuels in aircraft. I am certainly not aware of any Saskatchewan farmer who has crashed his airplane because he has been using his tractor gas.

In the House we see two west coast Members of Parliament. I refer to the Hon. Member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Belsher) and the Hon. Member for Surrey—White Rock (Mr. Friesen) laughing and joking about the matter. The serious matter they have not commented on is the improvement to Vancouver airport. I refer to the second runway. The Government has been absolutely silent on the matter and is creating an enormous safety hazard in the area. At the same time those two Members voted, along with other members of the Government, to freeze hiring of air traffic controllers for three years, something which has created a desperate shortage and which has placed the travelling public from the ridings of Surrey—White Rock and Fraser Valley East in a serious safety situation.