

best advice he found in Canada, a corporate plan for VIA Rail.

It is one that did not envisage in the long term the continued pay-out of substantial subsidies to VIA Rail, subsidies in the amount that are now being paid out but a corporate plan that foresaw VIA Rail being a modern, efficient, competitive, productive and profitable rail passenger service for Canada.

Fundamental to that plan was examining, as has been developed in other countries, notably Japan and countries in Europe, a high-speed rail passenger service. Nobody who is serious about rail passenger traffic in Canada—and this is the argument of the Minister—would argue that the future of VIA Rail is its present or its past, a continuation of the kind and level and quality of service that we have today. Those who are serious about a rail passenger service in the country, including the former President who was fired, Mr. Denis deBelleval, looked into the future.

In fact they looked into the present in Japan and in Europe and saw that a rail passenger service could only be viable and survive if we looked seriously at the concept and the notion of high speed trains. Even in advance of receiving that corporate plan into which a great deal of work, thought and effort had gone, not to mention \$4 million of taxpayers' money, the Minister of Finance, with the concurrence of the Minister of Transport on April 27 in his Budget, took an arbitrary decision not only to wipe out the existing rail passenger service but to eliminate even the possibility of Canada looking seriously and soberly at the future, looking at the possibility and the concept of high speed trains.

It must be said that where high speed trains have matured in their development and where they are in place today they are not only efficient, on time and moving vast numbers of people, they are profitable. They have either paid or are paying for themselves. In some cases they are actually being used to cross-subsidize more remote services because of the level of profit involved in the operation of high speed trains. That is the kind of future that Mr. deBelleval and those at VIA today envisage for rail passenger service in Canada. That is the kind of concept which says that Canada in 1989 as a modern and yet, yes, Mr. Speaker, wealthy western nation surely should seriously examine. That is the kind

Supply

of future which this Government in a short-sighted desire to meet the bottom line objective of the Minister of Finance turned its back on. Nothing less than that was the consequence of the decision by the Minister of Transport.

• (1020)

I come from Newfoundland and in Newfoundland we have some experience with a Government that tells you, "We are not eliminating your service, my friend, we are merely making an adjustment. Actually what we are going to do is make your service better and more productive. Trust us. There is no plan back here on the shelf to eliminate your service entirely. We would never do such a dastardly thing."

I recall the words of the Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie), the Minister of Transport's colleague in Cabinet, when he told Newfoundlanders, "Those who would suggest the abandonment of the rail service in Newfoundland are treacherous. They are traitors to Newfoundland and I will have none of it." Those words still echo in the far corners of this exalted Chamber if you listen carefully. You can listen as hard as you want but you cannot hear the sound of the train crossing the tracks of Newfoundland any more because that train is gone, abandoned. The rails are rusting.

We heard in Newfoundland exactly the same kind of pact, the same kind of deception, the same kind of phoney assurance, the same kind of "my hands are clean and I cannot do anything about it. We merely make the financial decisions, the rest is up to CN or VIA Rail." The same kind of nonsense we heard in Newfoundland we are hearing today about VIA Rail.

Mr. Mifflin: And no compensation.

Mr. Tobin: And no compensation. Canadians should know that when this Minister rises as he will in a few minutes, and he gives them once again those assurances that the matter is not really in our hands it is in VIA Rail's, perhaps through lease and adjustment, but the fundamentals of a service shall be there at least in Canada's best served cities and population areas. When he gives us those assurances, remember, I say to those who listen to his words, that these are the same assurances from the same Government that we have heard about train service in the Province of Newfoundland, a service that is now entirely gone.