

Adjournment Debate

become conglomerates to compete with the private sector, a sector which has to compete under many different rules and under a much more realistic set of circumstances.

It is pretty clear that the Minister of Transport has made up his mind at this point not to honour any requests by Dr. LeClair, the chief executive officer for CN, for funds to repair railway rolling stock. But he has no compunction in approving the construction of new coal cars at the Transcona works, regardless of their cost. The Minister may choose to elaborate on this. I hope he does, but he certainly did nothing to disprove those conditions when he replied to my question today.

I suggest to the Minister with due deference that this is absolutely irresponsible of the Government. It is irresponsible because it makes a lot of sense, on whatever basis one considers it, to repair existing railway rolling stock. There is a perfectly good facility for doing that, and it would create employment in the process at Transcona and also in Moncton. However, it does not make sense, for the reasons I have just indicated, for the railway to become involved in the construction of new railway rolling stock, because it will be done at an excessive cost by a Crown corporation, when there are other industries, and not just in my constituency, that badly need the work.

Returning to the Hawker Siddeley works, which is a key industry in the entire Province, many people are asking me why we are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on make-work projects of little value—some of them at least—when with some imagination the moneys paid out in UIC benefits to the workforce at Trenton, if applied to the cost of production, would contribute substantially to providing the company with a competitive edge in the manufacture of railway rolling stock for export at which they are very assiduous. There was some evidence of that in the House today.

For the Minister's information, we have approximately 2,000 people who require nearly \$200 per week in social benefits of one kind or another to keep themselves and their families. This results from the lack of work in this key industry. A quick calculation shows that that is about \$400,000 per week. For that kind of money, these people and the company would have a substantial head start in producing railway axles, rolling stock, modern marine fittings or something useful, rather than having the plant sitting idle with the work force sitting at home demoralized. Everybody would benefit, including the Government.

I do not understand why more concern and more aid is not being shown or given. I know the Government is faced with hard, unpleasant economic decisions, but at the same time there has to be a certain amount of equity between regions and between constituencies. A \$120 million yearly loss is apparently acceptable in the manufacture of heavy water in the eastern part of our Province, but there does not seem to be any plans to manufacture railway rolling stock in anticipation of what the Government assures us will be an increased need for such equipment.

I can relate this to the issue before the House today. We have been told at various times that there would be benefits for Sysco and Hawker Siddeley because of the changed Crow rate,

at this would create an increased need for rails and railway cars in the West. So far we have seen no tangible results. That is typical. I have not heard any optimistic forecast about the need for much heavy water lately, but the work force is being maintained in that regard. I have no complaint about that, as long as there is an equal concern shown for my constituency.

The Central Nova area has not been the beneficiary of the investment activity which has characterized the Halifax-Dartmouth metro area. Nor has it received the magnitude of economic assistance that has been allocated to Cape Breton. It is important to our country, as well as to individual Provinces, that all regions be allowed to develop and receive fairness in the allotment of Government resources and the establishment of priorities for development. Now is a good and proper time for the Government to demonstrate that sort of concern, and to expedite, in co-operation with management, appropriate orders for this vital industry. This industry needs to have more diversification, and needs some encouragement to prepare for any role it can play vis-à-vis offshore development.

● (1815)

What do we hear? Not long ago the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) suggested a possible steel fabrication plant in his adjacent constituency to provide 1,000 jobs. That is absolutely and patently ridiculous when there is a plant here sitting practically deserted that is quite capable of doing any kind of steel fabrication of heavy industry components. What we need, and I suggest this to Minister very emphatically, is less political fabrication in the was of some of these grandiose programs—make-work projects as their announced goal with very little lasting benefit—a little bit less manoeuvring and a little more concern for investing Government funds in existing industries that can produce useful equipment.

If the Minister has the kind of imagination and concern I think he has, he will look into this. He will make sure that any of the work that Hawker Siddeley gets because of its very expert and hard-working marketing development team in other parts of the world will not in any way be used against it keeping it from getting its fair share of domestic orders.

At the same time, I urge the Minister to make very sure that the Export Development Corporation steps forward to finance a possible order the company is in a very good position to receive from Nigeria. I remind him that this Government did exactly that to finance a grandiose statue for the socialist revolution in Algeria. In this case, this is a much more realistic priority.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I confirmed this afternoon there would be no special money from the budget for repair of rolling stock. One of the reasons is a philosophy which says you should not repair too much in anticipation, not knowing what you are going to use later on. That is something that happens very often. Another reason might be that already there is a need for the purchase of hopper cars and coal cars. The Hon. Member knows as well as