

Oral Questions

Mr. Mulroney: The Toronto Social Planning Council. I have not read the document. But perhaps my hon. friend would be interested, inasmuch as they predicted job losses this year, that since January 1 this year there have been 209,000 new jobs created in Canada, and 95 per cent of them are full-time jobs.

[*Translation*]

As for Québec, 344,000 new jobs were created since September 1984, compared to a net loss of 30,000 jobs under the Liberal Government.

In Montreal, 127,000 more people were on the labour market in 1988 than in 1984. Montreal's unemployment rate is 8.7 per cent, down from 11.3 per cent in September 1984. That is tremendous progress! We realize that there are serious problems in Montreal and we will deal with them seriously, in order to solve them permanently, as much as possible, for the benefit of all Montrealers.

[*English*]

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, VIA Rail's business plan that was released by the Minister says the Atlantic maintenance centre will be closed. In this House yesterday the Prime Minister said it will remain open.

Given that the maintenance centre is designed to service the RDC trains which currently run on the now to be shut down regional Atlantic routes, and that the transcontinental trains are serviced in Montreal, is he now planning to shut down operations in Montreal? Which is it, people out of work in Halifax or in Montreal?

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said yesterday, as I said, that the Halifax maintenance centre will be maintained. I also said the discussions are ongoing with the president and chief executive officer of VIA Rail to see how the operations of the maintenance centres will be managed. That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, the Minister in his opening statement at the press theatre yesterday said that the details should be left to Mr. Lawless to tell us. Obviously the two did not have their act together because they are saying different things in different documents.

• (1430)

My supplementary question is for the Minister of Transport. Yesterday in the House the Prime Minister said very clearly that the cost to the taxpayer of the rail system in the corridor was \$100 per passenger. The actual cost is \$15.77 per passenger. I ask the Minister of Transport to indicate to the House which is the accurate figure in terms of the subsidy level paid by the Canadian taxpayer—the one of the Prime Minister's or the one that shows up in his documents?

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, my friend should be serious. He said \$15. The average in Canada is \$110. He speaks about the corridor, but he should say that on some routes in British Columbia it is \$483 for every passenger on a train.

I believe we have to repeat. This network we propose is a national one but also an affordable network. If we listen to what is said by our friends in the NDP, we will expend money we do not have and we will kill VIA Rail. We will keep VIA Rail alive, but what we must have is a reasonable, affordable, national, and sustainable network now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Prime Minister. On August 19, 1988, three months before the election, the Prime Minister appeared before 1,000 residents of the riding of Saint-Hyacinthe, on the platform of the station in Acton Vale, and reminded them that it was his Government that saved the passenger rail service between Sherbrooke and Montreal after the Liberal cutbacks. Yesterday, the Prime Minister did an about face and announced that this very important service, whose ridership increased by 6,000 between 1987-88, had been cancelled. My question to the Prime Minister is this: Why did he mislead the people of Saint-Hyacinthe and the people of Quebec about the future of their railway service, just to get their votes?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is wrong, because although it is true there have been cuts in the service between Montreal and Sherbrooke that includes a stop in Acton Vale, I can inform the Hon. Member that Canadian trains on the Montreal-Sherbrooke route will continue to stop three days a week in Acton Vale.