

### Supply

extremely crucial and growing so in British Columbia and Alberta.

We are not out to save our past. Let us face it; all of us on this side, in this corner, will be more than happy to get rid of that junk that VIA Rail calls trains. It is outmoded. It has been outmoded for the last 15 to 20 years if not longer.

My colleague, the member for Regina—Lumsden, was calling year after year for the government of the day to invest in new equipment; not to waste money repairing old junk but to invest in new equipment.

I think there were seven ministers of transport, Liberal and Conservative, who promised—it wasn't an election commitment or spending commitment; it was a promise—new passenger rail equipment, new coaches, new sleeping cars, new baggage cars: all of the tools needed to turn VIA Rail into a modern rail passenger service. Seven ministers of transport promised that in this House and on the hustings. Two different governments, Conservative and Liberal, promised legislation.

I listened with amazement to my neighbour, the member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon, as he read out this new report from the Liberal Party of what it would do for VIA Rail. I have heard it all before. In fact, if you turn to a report called *The Last Straw*, the report of the task force on rail passenger services of October 1981 of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, it is almost word for word.

There is a saying: "What goes around comes around". We have said it from this corner time and time again. When in opposition the Liberals and the Conservatives are great friends of VIA Rail, but wait until they get to the government side. When the Liberals were over there they cut 20 per cent of the system and the Tories got on the rails and went from one end of the country to the other condemning the action, condemning the fact that the decision was made by cabinet without public hearings.

What do they do when they get into power? The same thing. Lo and behold, who is travelling across the country now to save VIA Rail? It is the Liberals.

The reality is that when the committee report says that VIA Rail was designed to fail it is the product of the sorry past of the Liberals contributed to the current history of the Conservatives. If members of the Liberal

Party had lived up to their promises to bring in legislation to create VIA Rail and instead of a dollar item in Estimates had given it a legislative mandate and invested the money the money that they promised they would invest in new equipment, the Tories would not be able to do what they are doing today. That is the reality of this issue.

Having said that, the Conservative Government of Canada today has no right whatsoever to do what it is doing to VIA Rail.

**Mr. Belsher:** We have every right.

**Mr. Angus:** The hon. member says that they have the right. They may have the legal right, but they do not have the moral right. That is why since June of this year, when I tabled the first petition in this House, we have had hundreds of thousands of Canadians writing their names on petitions and letters that have been tabled in this House, sent to the Prime Minister, sent to the Minister of Transport, and sent to the man who wears two hats, the president of VIA Rail and CN. These are Canadians who say VIA Rail is important to them.

Well over 300 municipalities from one end of this country to the other—not just cities, towns and villages that are served by VIA Rail but others as well—have called on the government to hold public hearings and to put a moratorium on the cuts. They have appeared before the transport committee. They have appeared in the streets, in Toronto, in Windsor, in Vancouver and on Cape Breton. They appeared outside today, representatives of communities from across this land.

They are saying that VIA Rail is important. They are saying that the seven million people who use VIA Rail are important, that the service they use is important and must be maintained not as a *status quo* item but as a starting point to build a system which will take us to the year 2000.

• (1720 )

It is entirely possible every other industrialized country in the world is doing it. Look at the United States with Amtrak, look at Great Britain with Brit Rail, look at the French rail services, the Japanese, the Italian, the German and the Australian. All major countries are investing in rail passenger services because they see it as the way to go.