

Oral Questions

VIA Rail in a very good financial situation thereafter, or did he even try?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, my activities behind the scenes have to remain secret of course. I can assure you that you would find them very interesting were I to expose myself to your gaze while engaged in them.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Axworthy: Save yourself the trouble.

Mr. Crosbie: With regard to this question, I regret that we are not in a position to go any further at this time with VIA Rail. We believe that the steps we are taking will considerably improve service, improve comfort and convenience for passengers, and help VIA to be on time more and more in the future. It involves the purchase of new locomotives and the refurbishing of equipment. I think the hon. gentleman will find a considerable improvement. The question of new cars will still have to be dealt with at some time in the future.

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, we have heard that line from many, many Ministers.

EFFECT OF DECISION

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, why did the Minister's Government not take into consideration the impact of this decision on the workers at CanCar in Thunder Bay and Bombardier in Montreal? Why did it not take into consideration the fact that not going ahead with the contract would cost the taxpayer, including the UIC fund, upwards of \$30 million to protect the workers whose jobs will be lost as a result? Why did the Government not consider those matters when it discussed the question?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the work which we are now providing VIA Rail with the funds to do will involve 8,000 person-years of work in the construction and manufacturing sectors. We are not forgetting that.

The hon. gentleman should ask the companies which he mentioned whether they were keeping that problem in mind when they submitted their prices to do this work. The cars came in at hundreds of thousands of dollars in excess of what had originally been estimated.

The hon. gentleman might well ask them why they did not sharpen their pencils and come in with a price which we might have found sustainable rather than one \$100 million in excess of what was originally envisaged.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION
FROM INDIA

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw to the attention of Members the presence in the gallery today of a parliamentary delegation from India led by Mr. Sat Paul Mittal, Member of Parliament, Chairman of the Parliamentarians Action for Removal of Apartheid.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[Translation]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR REINSTATEMENT OF CERTAIN POSTAL SERVICES

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for Canada Post, who was in the House earlier, or to whom-ever is prepared to answer on his behalf. Since it came to power, the Conservative Government has cut postal services by installing its so-called superboxes and by closing down post offices in rural areas. Soon, Canadians will have no postal services at all, thanks to the irresponsible attitude of the Minister responsible for the Post Office, and this may bring about a strike. Could the Minister or his surrogate inform the House why the Government keeps using confrontation tactics with its workers instead of being concerned about restoring the postal services this Government has cut, while it continues to deprive Canada of essential services?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister has just left the Chamber for a minute. I will take notice of the question and get back to him.

Mr. Speaker: I will recognize the Hon. Member again later.

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AGRICULTURE

OECD AGREEMENT TO REDUCE GRAIN SUBSIDIES—EFFECT ON
CANADA

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. In response to the OECD agreement to reduce grain export subsidies the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Amstutz has said that U.S. proposals to reduce subsidies in step with Europe will take 10 to 13 years to achieve.