

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, January 15, 1990.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table two reports: first, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review dealing with the Department of Finance; and second, the Provincial Tax Comparison between all the provinces in Canada, something that has been handed out by Ministers of Finance for a number of years.

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Rafferty-Alameda Dam Project Agreement Process

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) has rejected the legal system as a means to safeguard Manitoba's environment and Manitoba's interest and has chosen instead to use exclusively the political process. Last week, I stated in the House that, like the Grasslands-Rafferty deal of spring '88 and Premier Devine's offer of July '89 prior to the second licence for Rafferty-Alameda, we now have another secret deal. Can the Minister of Environment inform the House as to what his investigations have uncovered about this additional secret deal?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, as I said the last time the Member brought up this question, I would not condone something that was done in the manner which he is referring to. It is still clearly my understanding that a decision has not been made on Rafferty.

Legal Intervention

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the parameters of a secret deal about to be consummated by the Governments of Saskatchewan and Canada. Why has the Minister rejected using the legal system to defend our interest when it is obvious the Minister cannot operate competently in the political realm?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, this Government went to the hearings last summer in Melita to make sure that we asked for the completion of the work on the Souris River. We were faced with a licence that was later on issued against the best advice we gave at those public hearings.

We, since then, have received a ruling from the court system which has in fact upheld the position we took

at that time. We will now have the security of receiving the additional of finishing work on the Souris River valley to make sure that Manitoba's interests and any impacts on the river are examined and are either mitigated or eliminated.

As I said earlier, I would not condone something that would appear to have been made in an advance deal or some kind of a secretive method that the Member suggests. When I have received a copy of what it is he tabled, perhaps I will have further comment.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, we are aware that the Minister is not happy with this, but Manitobans are not happy with his performance.

Agreement Process

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): When is the Minister going to get a straight answer from his Tory cousins in Saskatchewan and Ottawa, stop all the whisperings because they have been lying to him? When are we going to get the straight goods?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, if I have been misled by any jurisdiction within this country, I do not take my responsibility any less lightly to make sure that the best interests of Manitoba and the Souris River basin are taken care of. That has been our uppermost objective all along, whether it is done through the complete environmental process as we asked for and as we demanded at Souris, or whether or not it is achieved through other means, when we were faced with the reality of the licence having been issued. We have one single purpose uppermost in our mind and that is to make sure Manitoba's interests are taken care of and that is unchanged, Mr. Speaker.

Independent Panel Review

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I have another question. The Federal Court of Canada has ordered that the federal Minister of the Environment is to establish an independent panel to review the Rafferty-Alameda Dam project by January 31, 1990. How does this Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), first of all, think an independent panel can be set up and, secondly, function when three-quarters of the project, the Rafferty Dam, will be fait accompli by this secret deal between Bouchard and McLeod in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) refers to the judgment that was brought down between Christmas and New Year's dealing with the construction of the Rafferty-Alameda project. He has simply reiterated what the judge brought forward and that was appoint a panel before the end of the month or the licence becomes invalid. Let him not confuse that with

the position we took, which is that the construction should be halted until a complete hearing is finished. That was and is our position.

* (1340)

Mr. Taylor: It is quite obvious that, whatever the wants are over here, the project is not going to stop. The project speed will be accelerated. Therefore, will the Minister be satisfied that the independent panel to be established by January 30 would only be a formal panel and of no consequence whatsoever, because the project will be done before the panel has reported? Was he going to be satisfied with that?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I take it that the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) is quite critical of the order from the federal judge. Obviously we are not satisfied. The construction has gone ahead without complete guarantees for this province to mitigate and to eliminate impacts upon Souris River and the downstream effects in Manitoba. Other than that, Mr. Speaker, he is simply being critical of the ruling that is brought down. Our position has always been clear.

Legal Intervention

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): The issue is the juxtaposition of the court order and the fact of the dam being completed. That is the issue. The question, Mr. Speaker, is: when is this Government and when is this Minister going to start doing their own homework instead of depending on others? When are they prepared to use other methods such as the legal system to carry out that homework?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, we have reiterated time and time again our concern about wanting to have the downstream effects on the Souris and on the Manitoba side of the boundary eliminated or mitigated. He is asking this Government to overturn what the federal court has just ordered Saskatchewan and the federal Government to do. It seems to me that he does not understand the ruling.

An Honourable Member: I understand the ruling. When are you going to take action?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Paper Bag Contract

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Manitobans are experiencing, on a number of occasions bad news in terms of our economy, VIA Rail today, plant closings over the last year, other indications of lost jobs and employment that is generally accumulating into a situation where Winnipeg has gone from the second-lowest unemployment rate in Canada, seventh or eighth or ninth depending on what month we are in.

My question is to the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Liquor Commission. Can the Minister tell this House and Manitobans whether there was any impact study on the loss of jobs with the Manitoba Liquor Commission awarding the bag contract outside of Manitoba, away from a company located on Inkster Avenue in the City of Winnipeg, for the second time, a company named Daishowa that is located in Manitoba on Inkster Avenue? What are the impact and loss of jobs that the Minister was made aware of by tendering out the contract to an American firm?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act): I will inquire of the commission of the information being sought by the Honourable Member and obtain it for him.

Layoffs

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): In the second time in the last six months, the contract has moved from Winnipeg to the United States under the Manitoba Liquor Commission. There is a proposal now to lay off between 15 and 25 employees. In fact, the company is meeting with the union as we speak on potential loss of employment in Manitoba.

Did the Liquor Commission inform the Minister that there could be loss of employment with the awarding of the contract to an American firm? What was the criteria used for the selection of an outside Winnipeg and Manitoba firm for this contract?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act): As I said in my first answer, Mr. Speaker, I will inquire of the commission and get back to the Honourable Member.

Contract Awarding Process

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): I would ask the Minister to put an immediate halt, if the Minister is not being informed, on contracts being awarded to American firms until the Minister and the Government, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst), is satisfied that: a) it is not part of free trade; and b) it is not part of exporting jobs in our Manitoba economy that are needed. I would ask the Minister, would he agree to put a halt on these contracts pending his being made aware by the Liquor Commission of these contracts and the impact on employment in Manitoba and in the City of Winnipeg.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act): I will take the Honourable Member's question as a representation in the light of the information I get from the Liquor Control Commission.

* (1345)

Printing Industry Out-of Province Contracts

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition):

I would ask the Premier to investigate the awarding of a number of printing contracts and paper contracts in the Province of Manitoba and whether in fact there is any loss leader by American firms to obtain business in Manitoba which in the short run may be part of the tendering process, but in the long run may be part of a loss leader process to take jobs away from the Manitoba and Winnipeg economy.

I would ask the Premier whether there has been any investigation of the whole printing/packaging area in the province, particularly in relationship to Crown corporations. How many jobs are we to lose under this North American free market system in this particular area?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am aware that there are some major printing firms in Manitoba such as D.W. Friesen in Altona that do the vast share of their work outside our province. In fact, by far the greatest portion of the printing they do comes from outside our province. In fact, this burgeoning, expanding industry, one of the most expansive industries in southern Manitoba, benefits substantially by being able to bid upon and gain contracts outside our province, much to the benefit in employment and economic terms of this Province of Manitoba. I will take the Member's question and ask for some examination to be made of the allegations that he makes.

I just caution the Member that if we were to impose constraints on people getting work in printing from Manitoba that we might in fact invite the same kind of reaction in response from other jurisdictions which would prevent a huge firm such as Friesen from being in business and in fact probably destroy many, many times the number of jobs that he is talking about.

VIA Rail Cutbacks Legal Intervention

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, January 15, 1990, will be marked as a tragic day for Canada, a day remembered by future generations as the day marking the destruction of our national rail transportation system.

The movement of goods, services and people across this country was a precondition for many of the provinces joining Confederation, and because of the actions taken today by the federal Government we have the ending, the completion, of this system that was constitutionally guaranteed and of a nation that we know in its full ramifications from the last century.

My question to the Premier is this: in that he has obviously failed to convince the Prime Minister to reverse his decision on VIA, what other options is he considering, such as intervening in the British Columbia case in order to put before the highest court of the land the case of VIA and the Canadian people?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I find it quite hypocritical for the Leader of the Liberal Party

to be making accusations about Government moves on cuts to VIA Rail. I quote Jean-Luc Pepin, the former federal Minister responsible for transportation in the Trudeau Government, the Government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, at whose shrine she worships every day. I quote these comments from an article of just a few months ago. Pepin accused the Liberal Party of hypocrisy for defending a network it contemplated shutting down completely while in Government. Turner keeps repeating that this Government has broken his dream, Pepin said. It is really quite pathetic.

He said that the economic arguments he put to Cabinet for making the cuts to VIA rail were so strong that four Ministers of the then Trudeau Government suggested shutting down the whole network. "I had three or four colleagues right then in 1981," this is the Trudeau Liberal Government, "contemplating shutting down VIA Rail."

I think it is quite pathetic that the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) would try and make political hay over this—

* (1350)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Carstairs: The record is stuck in a very bad groove. I did not agree with Jean-Luc Pepin then. I do not agree with him now. Mr. Speaker, what we are calling for is action—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Carstairs: What we were calling for today is some action from this Premier, action which would go along with the promises made by the Leader at whose feet he worships in the election campaign in 1984.

Manitoba Jobless Statistics

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): The Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger) promised this House last Monday that on Tuesday he would give us a breakdown of the impact of VIA cuts. Will this Government, through the First Minister, now present that to the House?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): It is really quite pathetic because now this Leader of the Liberal Party is attempting to bring back into place a Government of Jean Chretien, one of the colleagues, one of the close confidants of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, one of the architects of this policy to shut down VIA Rail in this country, Mr. Speaker. That is what is so hypocritical; that is what is so pathetic.

Out of the one side of her mouth, she is arguing against VIA Rail cuts; out of the other side, she is supporting for the leadership and the Prime Ministership an individual who was part of that gang that sought

to shut down VIA Rail. That is the concern that I have on behalf of all Manitobans. How can we put up with this hypocrisy? How can we put up with this bleating from an individual who wants to bring back that same gang, reincarnated under Jean Chretien, to get rid of VIA Rail? Can we really take her seriously?

Mrs. Carstairs: I am proud of the Constitution Act of 1982. I do not think our Premier can say the same about the constitutional agreement called the Meech Lake Accord.— (interjection)— Well, he did like it, but then he decided that the people in Manitoba were right, as they are right about the closure of VIA Rail.

Job Transfers

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, we have learned that all tickets will now go through a central booking system through central Canada for VIA. Can the First Minister tell us how many more jobs this will mean to Manitoba and how many more will go to Ontario and Quebec?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I guess we would have to ask the Leader of the Liberal Party where Jean Chretien stands now on Meech Lake, because the latest information is that Jean Chretien is now attempting to waffle on Meech Lake. He is somewhere in the middle. The Leader of the Liberal Party here in Manitoba, the Leader of the Opposition, is now saying he has the right to waffle—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Taylor: I believe the Rules of this House require that the respondent to the question has to be at least somewhat on the subject matter. I am not certain what some candidate for the federal leadership potentially has to do with the question that was posed to the First Minister in this House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Mr. Filmon: On a point of order, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you noted as I—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: I am sure, Mr. Speaker, you noted as I did that in the preamble to her question the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) clearly referred to both the Constitution Act of 1982 and the Meech Lake

Accord of 1987, which was what I was responding to very clearly.

An Honourable Member: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Thompson, on the same point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I am sure some people might find it entertaining to hear the debate of who did a worse job on VIA Rail, the Tories or the Liberals. We in the New Democratic Party—

Mr. Speaker: To the point of order, please.

* (1355)

Mr. Ashton: —feel that it is a waste of time. They both have done a lousy job and we should get on with Question Period.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) —(interjection)— Order, please. The Honourable Member is quite correct, where answers should be as brief as possible, should not provoke debate and should deal with the matter raised.

North Portage Development Corp. Parking Garage Contract

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Urban Affairs or the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ducharme), whichever hat he feels more comfortable wearing today.

Since the village of Portage Place contributed nothing, why did the North Portage Development Corporation advance \$2.7 million to the village of Portage Place to build a parking garage giving title to the developer and thereby putting the corporation at risk of losing its investment, its future revenue and the parking garage itself?

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is no surprise that a certain amount of monies under the agreement signed by the previous administration did include a parking garage, the same type of parking garage signed by the previous federal Liberal Government when they did the Investors building and when they did the Cadillac Fairview building, so there is no surprise. The parking garage was supplied, and that is a general rule of thumb for all of the agreements.

There is a meeting going on now to look at the different options that are available. There is a meeting now at the North Portage. My representatives, who were not present in 1986, are reviewing those along with the other six representatives and coming forward with a solution.

Documentation Request

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge, with a supplementary question.

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question to the Minister. Yes indeed, the Board of Directors of the North Portage Development Corporation is meeting today. Could the Minister tell the House what instructions he gave to his representatives, and specifically did he ask them to argue persuasively to make all the documents public?

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I did advise the Member from across the way—and I guess he is getting the same questions back that he started a week ago.

However, my instructions to my representatives were to look at all options that are available, make sure—first of all the first hat, Urban Affairs, you wanted to know the first hat—that no public new monies be put forward to make sure that—back into this project. On my Housing hat, the main idea was to protect the \$18.5 million of taxpayers' money that is into this project, that is now insured by CMHC.

Board of Directors

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, I have a final supplementary question to the Premier. To whom are the directors of the North Portage Development Corporation responsible and who is responsible for this mess?

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Urban Affairs): First of all, maybe the Member would like to go across the way and ask the people who did draft this original agreement. My representatives right now of the provincial Government are like everybody else in this room. They are responsible to the taxpayers of Manitoba.

Rail Transportation Passenger Service

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, today the last train goes west through the south line for VIA Rail. Hundreds of workers and their families have been dislocated by the many job cuts that have taken place while the federal Conservative Government is implementing what many feel in this House as well are absurd and backward policies regarding VIA Rail. They are killing VIA Rail while they implement it and abandoning historic services and obligations to western Canada. At the same time, they put in place a Royal Commission to oversee the funeral of VIA Rail.

I ask the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger), will this Minister now reject emphatically the federal Conservative policy that the best way to meet the increased demand for rail passenger services is to use antique equipment, reduce services and jack up fare structures for western Canadians? Is that this Minister's vision of rail transportation passenger services in this country?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to express regret and disappointment in the decision of the federal Government regarding VIA Rail.

I have put forward the position of this Government many, many times. I made 11 written submissions regarding VIA to the federal Government, to CN. I had three personal meetings with people involved, and we have been very consistent in terms of the position that we put forward in terms of opposition to the way the federal Government has handled the VIA situation. The Member is well aware of that.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Dauphin, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Plohman: We have seen the failure of the policies of this Government similar to the Liberals before them. It is interesting to see the black cats and the white cats arguing about who is the worst to VIA Rail.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I would like to remind the Honourable Member that we refer to all Honourable Members as Honourable Members. The Honourable Member for Dauphin will kindly put his question.

Mr. Plohman: I will certainly do that, Mr. Speaker.

We learned this past week that, contrary to the statements by Mike Williams of VIA Rail, the northern rates will increase, as a matter of fact, 100 percent increases on the northern rate for sleeper services between The Pas and Churchill.

I ask this Minister, will this Minister now agree that all or part of the Tory agenda to drive people from VIA Rail, to justify their callous regard for transportation cuts in this country, will devastate this country? Will this Minister now take action to overcome those kinds of policies and take serious public action instead of standing there and writing letters behind closed doors and thinking his patting on the back—

* (1400)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please, order, please. The question has been put. The Honourable Minister of Transportation.— (interjection)— Order, please. Order.

Mr. Albert Driedger: I have to express some regret at the attitude of the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) on this whole issue. He is making light of an issue. He is trying to play politics with something that is very important to the people of Manitoba and the people of Canada.

When he says sitting behind closed doors, writing letters, I took a whole group down to Ottawa to make a presentation to the National Transportation Committee, together with the union, with the Winnipeg Chamber, with their Party involved, as well as the Liberal Party involved, in support of the kind of presentation

that I made. So let him not indicate to anybody or to the people of Manitoba that we have not been actively pursuing the position of Manitoba. We will continue to do so.

Northern Service

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Dauphin, with his final supplementary question.

Mr. John Plohma (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, the northern services are going to be the next ones to go. I ask this Minister, will this Minister now admit that his low-key representation that he has been making over the last number of months has been a failure on behalf of Manitobans? Will he admit that? Will he finally take the gloves off with the federal Government and let them know that he will not stand for this cut of these historic services in this province?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I think the Member has a bit of a cavalier attitude toward this whole thing. I have indicated in this House when we went down, we got a commitment from the federal Minister that for five years we would be guaranteed services to the North. We are working together with all kinds of interested groups to make sure that we keep the pressure on the federal Government and the federal Minister to make sure we have services provided to the North at a rate that they can afford.

Victims' Assistance Fund Rape Counselling

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): The Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) is mandated to provide necessary supports for those in need. Since last July, press has been made of her Government for funding a sexual abuse counsellor and court advocate for the Interlake community. However, this Government has put the request on hold.

Is the Minister of Family Services able to provide an explanation of the actions she has taken to convince her Cabinet colleagues to release some of the hundreds of thousands of dollars sitting in the Victims' Assistance Fund, or has she bothered to do anything at all?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): This Government has been very active in the field of help to women. In the Interlake region alone, we have increased the funding to the shelter, we have increased funding to help victims of abuse in that area. The regional staff in that area also help with counselling to people who are in crisis situations.

Victims' Assistance Fund Rape Counselling

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Selkirk, with a supplementary question.

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, this Government is mandated by law to direct the funds in

the Victims' Assistance Fund to victims. Will the Minister of Family Services take immediate actions to put in place sexual abuse counsellors in rural Manitoba by advocating the release of these funds, funds that her Government is heartlessly hoarding?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Just when I got the feeling that the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) was adopting somewhat more responsible attitudes with regard to the spending of monies, we get this question today from the Honourable Member for Selkirk with respect to the Victims' Assistance Fund.

I can tell the Honourable Member for Selkirk, with whom I have discussed this matter privately, that later this month we expect to be in possession of the needs analysis which has been prepared for the Victims' Assistance committee. Shortly thereafter, we can develop a policy framework for the future of that fund. Before very long, we will be able to deal with matters like this in an organized and rational kind of way rather than just opening up the fund and opening up the Brink's truck, as it has been called.

The Honourable Member for Selkirk might speak to the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) because he maybe is starting to catch on about taxpayers' money. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) introduced today—public money, if it pleases the Honourable Member—information respecting tax comparisons. Any public funds are public funds and the Honourable Members ought to understand that.

Rape Assessments Rural Services

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Selkirk, with a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): If these dollars are to go to victims, they are not dollars for the Government to hoard. Will the Minister of Health, in realizing that after three months of knowing that medical assessments for rape victims are not available at all times in rural Manitoba, direct the College of Physicians and Surgeons to have a workable medical plan available in all communities in all of this province?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the issue of sexual abuse assessments throughout the province is one which I have had the opportunity to discuss with the College of Physicians and Surgeons on two different occasions, most recently last week.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons since 1982 has been attempting to make sexual abuse assessments more readily available not only throughout rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba, but indeed within the City of Winnipeg because currently only two of our hospitals in Winnipeg provide sexual abuse assessments, that being St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre. In rural Manitoba a number of hospitals do, through their physicians, sexual abuse assessments. In the last year, information I have received is that Selkirk has done some six assessments.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons is very proactively working with the administration and physicians not only in the hospitals of Winnipeg but throughout rural Manitoba to provide more balanced availability of sexual abuse assessment throughout the province for women in need.

Mentally Handicapped Employment Programs Funding

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier a question, and it rises out of a serious issue raised during the Estimates of the Department of Family Services pertaining to the lack of action by this Government to provide a program of follow-up supports for mentally handicapped people in employment programs. This administration has cut what was there when it came into power and now refuses to access a cost-shared program to the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Program, which is a federal cost-shared program.

My question to the Premier is this: would he consider looking into this matter and urge his Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) not to waste another moment and not to miss this opportunity of cost-shared dollars and ensure that a program of supports for mentally handicapped people in employment programs is put into place as quickly as possible?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Because the preambles of the Member for St. Johns are not always totally accurate, I will certainly look into the matter and report back to her on the resolution to the problem.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: To help the Premier in terms of assessing the accuracy, I would table a letter in this House, to him, from Premier Personnel which outlines clearly that there is no program in place to help put in place support programs for mentally handicapped people in employment programs.

I would ask the Premier in that regard if he would consider reading that letter very carefully and assessing the situation, because in fact Premier Personnel has said it can take no further individuals into the program and that the people already being served are not able to be served fully and completely. Would he look into that matter and ensure that Premier Personnel is able to get the funding they need?

Mr. Filmon: It is my understanding that the program that Premier Personnel is undertaking is a federally funded program. I will try and get more details and respond back to the Member on it.

* (1410)

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Johns, with her final supplementary question.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: I hope the Premier will be able to ascertain, as is the fact that what we are talking about is a program of follow-up supports for individuals in employment programs, which is a provincial responsibility and is addressed through a cost-shared program.

Sturgeon Creek Enterprises Program Review

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): My final question to the Premier is: would he consider looking into the opportunities available through organizations like Sturgeon Creek Enterprises Incorporated, which has certainly provided Members in this House the opportunity to provide employment programs for mentally handicapped individuals. We in this caucus are proud to have participated in that program and would recommend it to all Parties in this Chamber. I would ask the Premier, since leadership by example is often a key element in this whole area, would he consider reviewing the program available through Sturgeon Creek Enterprises and ask his caucus to consider being involved in that program?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I know from correspondence that I have seen and decisions that have been made by Treasury Board that this Government does fund Sturgeon Creek Enterprises. I will look into the matter to ascertain just exactly what it is that the Member is getting after.

Health Care Ventilator Shortage

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): On Friday, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) raised two issues regarding ventilators at St. Boniface. The first issue he raised was the use of a ventilator at St. Boniface from Seven Oaks. I am informed that sharing of standby equipment is normal within the health care system, effectively uses expensive equipment.

More importantly, I am pleased to indicate to my honourable friend that six state-of-the-art ventilator units are on their way because of an \$800,000 funding commitment by this Government to ventilators in the Province of Manitoba. That will give us an increased number of ventilators, plus the backup and the safety factor of having three ventilators on standby.

Respiratory Technician Shortage

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): The second issue my honourable friend raised was on respiratory technologists at St. Boniface. Management at the St. Boniface Hospital indicate that recruitment efforts of the newly graduating class are progressing very well, and they expect to fill those five positions for which budget has been provided this year from the graduating class.

Social Assistance Manitoba Rate

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): My question is to the Minister of Economic Security. Many of those on social assistance in Manitoba are disabled physically or mentally, usually through no fault of their own. These individuals, already less able, are treated with less equity in this province than in all others. Will the Minister

explain to this House why Manitoba has the lowest total annual income from social assistance, including federal provincial tax credits, of any province in this nation?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): The Member will have an opportunity very shortly to discuss these matters in the Estimates, but I should remind the Member that we have since we have been in Government increased the social assistance 3.9 percent last year and 4.9 percent this year. We are working to increase the money for people on social assistance.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Speaker, to the same Minister, can this Minister tell this House why Manitoba has the lowest rate of fixed assets for the disabled on social assistance of any province in Canada, only \$400 compared with \$3,000 in the much less well off provinces of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia? When will this Minister put forward the effort to enable our handicapped and disabled to live in dignity?

Mrs. Oleson: All these matters to do with social assistance are evaluated by my staff and recommendations will be coming forward. I am as concerned as he is with the levels and so forth, but we are working on it.

Mr. Rose: To the same Minister, can this Minister explain then why Manitoba also has the lowest level of retained earnings in Canada for persons on social assistance, only \$50 monthly, thereby creating a disincentive for these people to have work?

Mrs. Oleson: The Member will recall that in the Economic Security Department there are programs to assist people to find employment, to seek training which will hopefully enable them to be employed. We can discuss all these matters during the Estimates process.

Mathias Colomb Indian Band Provincial Court Resumption

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Flin Flon has time for one very short question.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): My question is to the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae). Mr. Speaker, on January 10 of this year, the Chief of the Mathias Colomb Band in Pukatawagan sent a letter to the Attorney General requesting some assistance with maintaining law and order in the community of Pukatawagan.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, the band requested two things: No. 1, to have court parties resuming their appearances in Pukatawagan so that justice could be meted out in that community; and second, a request that the band and council or their representatives be allowed some input into the sentencing which occurs with respect particularly to assaults and violent crimes in that community.

Mr. Speaker, like most members of most communities, they are concerned about their own safety and the safety of their families. Can the Minister of Justice (Mr.

McCrae) indicate what actions he is going to take to make sure that courts resume in the community of Pukatawagan and whether he will consider allowing the community to have some more direct input into the meting out of justice in those communities so they can be assured that justice actually prevails in those communities?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The potential solution referred to by the Honourable Member and suggested by the chief of the band in issue is an interesting one. I have correspondence for my signature on my desk as I speak, Mr. Speaker, to the chief of the band. So that we might talk about that, I would like to meet with that chief and chat with him about his proposal.

In addition, of course we have the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the work that it will be doing. I am sure, as the Honourable Member and I have already done, we will have an opportunity to discuss this again, but in the meantime I want to discuss this proposal with the chief myself.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Orders of the Day, I would like to draw Honourable Members' attention to the gallery where we have from the Balmoral School, seventeen Grades 2 to 6 students. They are under the direction of Darlene Dufily. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns).

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENTS

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern and Native Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I may have leave to make a non-political statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister have leave? Leave.

Mr. Downey: Let me first of all say thank you to the Members for giving me the opportunity to have leave to make this statement.

I, along with many of my colleagues, this morning participated in a program, Footloose & Fancy Free, a Manitoba walk-for-fitness activity. I participated in one of many walks throughout Manitoba and throughout the city which was sponsored and organized by the Manitoba Society of Seniors. They are to be congratulated for their commitment and their organization of this activity. The participating malls as well are to be congratulated for allowing their malls to be used in a safe—an environment which is conducive to the activities of seniors. I am sure it will add to the many activities and a better lifestyle for all those involved.

I believe there were some 175 seniors at Polo Park, and I know up to 100 at Steinbach and all the other

areas. I want to congratulate the seniors for their leadership and their participation.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for St. Vital have leave to make a non-political statement? Leave.

* (1420)

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): I welcome the remarks of the Minister and would like to add the compliments of the organization from the Liberal Party as well.

I was able to participate myself in St. Vital. I was delighted and pleased to see the number of seniors there, go through the callisthenics and then the one-kilometre walk through the mall. I think they should all be commended for the great work they have done, these sorts of programs by the MSOS and the Age and Opportunity and other participating sponsors, and particularly the malls, the owners of the malls, who have allowed this to go on an ongoing basis throughout the winter months. This is a program that will be taking place every morning.

I again want to add our appreciation to the MSOS, the Age and Opportunity and other seniors organizations for this much needed and very welcomed program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, under Rule 27(1), I would like to move a motion requesting a debate on a matter of urgent public importance.

I move, seconded by the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake),

THAT under Rule 27, the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the impact of VIA Rail cutbacks on Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before determining whether the motion meets the requirements of our Rule 27, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition will have five minutes to state her case for urgency on debate of this matter.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, as you well know, there are two conditions in Beauchesne's which would indicate whether this motion today has validity. One is that there is no ordinary opportunity which would allow the matter to be brought on earlier, and that the debate and opportunities have been completed.

Mr. Speaker, we have completed the Speech from the Throne debate which is a general debate. We have completed the Budget debate. We have finished the Estimates of Highways and Transportation. We have not before the House any loan acts or other pieces of legislation which have a sufficiently wide mandate in

which this particular debate discussion could take place. Today is of course of particular significance, because today is the day in which we have to deal with the tragic news from Ottawa that VIA cuts will have a dramatic impact on the people of this nation, cuts that were announced in the budget on the 26th of April, 1989.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is a serious matter. I am having great difficulty in hearing the remarks of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Carstairs: Despite the numerous letters from the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger), the federal Government has been unable or unwilling to listen to the pleas of Manitobans. Today, because the cuts take place today, is I believe the last opportunity that we have to lay a prima facie case before the people of Canada, the people of Manitoba, and hopefully the federal Government will finally listen to what it is that the Manitoba Legislature has to say.

I welcome the participation of all Members of this House, because I believe each and every one of us realizes that this has a negative impact upon our province and upon our country.

Mr. John Plohma (Dauphin): I would rise in support of this motion today because of what I believe is an urgent matter, urgent public importance, because we have seen over the last number of months in this House, the Minister of Transportation has constantly indicated to this House that he has been representing the interests of Manitobans in this issue, and yet we have seen no response. We have seen no change in decisions that have been made by the federal Government that would reflect the representation that the Minister says he makes.

As a matter of fact, we have just become aware that there will be, contrary to what VIA Rail has said, massive increases in the services to northern Manitoba. That could be the beginning of the end of that service, as well as the trains going east and west. In fact, what we may be looking at, Mr. Speaker, is not only 50 percent of the service being lost to this country, but in fact the end of the VIA services in this country.

I think we have to look, in discussions of this important issue on behalf of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, on the role that Governments have played in getting us to this point. The federal Liberal Government before, Jean-Luc Pepin, as was mentioned in this House earlier, the role that he has played and continues to play in supporting the federal Tory Government in Ottawa as they go merrily about their way of cutting their historic obligations insofar as rail transportation service in this country, and the lack of action by this Conservative Government here in Manitoba, as they play a low key in their response, try to leave the impression that they are making a strong representation on behalf of Manitobans when in fact there is very little happening insofar as concrete action by this Government to reverse these decisions, to bring public pressure to bear.

So I believe this Legislature has to discuss these issues at this particular time. It is of utmost importance for the future of our province. It impacts, the VIA cuts, on the history of this province, on Manitoba's position as a transportation centre and therefore warrants the undivided attention of all three Parties of this House in discussions this afternoon.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition raises a matter of extreme importance to people in western Canada and people in Manitoba. There is no question but that the matter is an important one. The matter though, the implementation of the federal Government's move in this direction, basically happened, as the Honourable Leader said, on the 13th of January. The matter of emergency debates in this House, I would suggest to Honourable Members, would have more to do with matters within the administrative competence of the Government of Manitoba.

I recall, for example, the case of the death of a child in the care of a provincial child caring agency. The Speaker at that time ruled that was indeed a matter of urgent importance to the Province of Manitoba and that the debate on the matter might very well go some distance toward the resolution of the matter.

In the case today, no such condition exists, Mr. Speaker. There has been a federal Cabinet decision. The federal Court of Canada has ruled that decision stands. We already know that our Minister of Highways and Transportation's (Mr. Albert Driedger) position has been made very, very clear with the federal Government on numerous occasions. The simple fact is that the Opposition perhaps sees this as an opportunity to get their position on the record. That is fine and dandy, to get your position on the record, but the position of all three Parties in this House is clearly on the record. The federal Government knows that. The federal Government makes its move. Whatever will be the result of the federal Government's move remains to be seen. They will be responsible for it, I hasten to add.

You know, I am having a little trouble with whatever the agenda of the Opposition happens to be in this House. Last week, the Opposition put us through two days of debate.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Government House Leader.

Mr. McCrae: Last week the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, put us through two days of debate on procedural parliamentary matters, tying up two days of the important business of the House on a matter on which all three Parties in this House agreed in the first place. It was a matter of Rules. On numerous other occasions in -(interjection)- Mr. Speaker, I am having trouble hearing.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Government House Leader has the floor.

Mr. McCrae: The Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch) talks about defending the federal move in

this direction. Absolutely not, that position is absolutely clear, on the record, and everybody in Manitoba knows it, that all three political Parties in this House are on the side of Manitobans and want to protect the interests of Manitobans with regard to this issue. The point is they took two days last week and many other days during the course of this Session on various so-called emergency debates. Now some of those debates where we have agreed as a Government Party to waive the Rules, that is fine and dandy, we have had those debates. Honourable Members seem not to want to get on the agenda of the people of Manitoba which we can properly do in this place. They seem to want to hold up the passage of the Estimates process.

* (1430)

We are already into a Session that has gone on far too long, Mr. Speaker, and so we can only wonder what the political agenda of Honourable Members opposite is. As I said, the Honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) has made the position of this Government crystal clear.

I do not know what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) wishes to achieve by this resolution today except perhaps the same old game the Liberals in this House are always playing, and that is politics. They put politics ahead of everything else it seems. We have important Estimates to pass, we have important services to provide to Manitobans, which is within the reach of our administrative competence. We have important Bills before this House that we could be dealing with but, no, Honourable Members opposite want to deal with their own agenda. What we see today is a little bit of the tyranny of the majority Opposition in this House, Mr. Speaker. We have tried on many, many occasions and in every day in our working lives around this place as a minority Government to behave as a minority Government, to work through compromise, to work through as much co-operation as possible.

I hear the Honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) laughing. I do not hear his House Leader (Mr. Alcock) laughing, and I do not hear the House Leader for the NDP (Mr. Ashton) laughing. The fact is we do have that kind of co-operative approach around here, and we are trying to do the business of the people, but this kind of tactic will not impress Manitobans. This resolution today, this application, is clearly beyond the scope of the Rules, and I would ask your Honour to rule according.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I did receive the notice of the motion of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs), as required by our Rules, and I have listened with care to the advice of Honourable Members respecting the urgency of debating this matter today. I want to thank them for their assistance to the Chair.

There are certain other opportunities to debate this matter. It could be addressed when the House is considering the proposed Private Members' Resolution No. 36 which calls upon the Assembly to affirm its support for VIA Rail and calls upon the federal

Government to live up to its original pledge to abandon plans for further cuts and to provide the necessary resources to VIA.

The subject could also be raised in a grievance debate. Elements of the issue could also be addressed when the Estimates of the Department of Labour are being considered later today, and in the future under the Estimates of the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism and of the Executive Council. As I previously informed the House, the matter to be considered according to Beauchesne's Citation 389, "must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention."

Urgency within this Rule means urgency of debate. Additionally, Beauchesne's Citation 390 states that, "when the ordinary opportunities provided by the Rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately."

This is a serious matter. However, I believe there are other opportunities to debate it. Therefore with regret, I must rule against the motion proceeding today as a matter of urgent public importance. The Honourable Government House Leader.

Mr. McCrae: I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, with the deepest amount of respect, I must challenge the ruling.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained? All those in favour will please say yea. All those opposed will please say nay. In my opinion, the yeas have it. The Honourable Member for Inkster.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call for Yeas and Nays.

Mr. Speaker: Call in the Members.

* (1500)

A STANDING VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

YEAS

Burrell, Connery, Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger (Emerson), Ducharme, Enns, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Hammond, Helwer, Manness, McCrae, Mitchelson, Neufeld, Oleson, Orchard, Pankratz, Penner, Praznik.

NAYS

Angus, Ashton, Carr, Carstairs, Charles, Cheema, Cowan, Doer, Driedger (Niakwa), Edwards, Evans (Brandon East), Gaudry, Gray, Harapiak, Harper, Kozak, Lamoureux, Maloway, Mandrake, Patterson, Plohman, Roch, Rose, Storie, Taylor, Uruski, Wasylcia-Leis.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas, 22; Nays, 27.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been overturned. The question before the House is: shall the debate proceed? (Agreed)

Therefore, the question before the House is, on the motion of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs), seconded by the Honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake), that under Rule 27 the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the impact of VIA Rail cutbacks on Manitoba.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE (Cont'd)

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my hope today that we would have a united House on this debate, that all Parties would have agreed and recommended to you that we spend this time today discussing a national tragedy, because indeed it is a tragedy that we are going to lose aspects of our national rail transportation system.

Mr. Speaker, it goes beyond that, because I truly believe it is in violation of our Constitution that guaranteed to British Columbia, when they entered into this land, the right to a national rail transportation service. As a result of these cutbacks, train transportation will no longer be available to the capital city of British Columbia. There will also be many communities that formerly were reached that will no longer be reached.

We have a situation before us that I had hoped would be addressed by our Government last week. The very first question that I asked in this House on Monday after we came back from Christmas recess, I asked questions with regard to what further role this Government was prepared to take with respect to VIA Rail. I asked, for example, for the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) to provide for the House a breakdown of the impacts, some \$50 million as he himself has indicated in letters to people throughout this province. He promised this House that he would provide that information by Tuesday of last week. He did not provide it and he has still not yet provided it.

(Mr. Neil Gaudry, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

When questions further in the week were asked, would this Government access every single avenue of protest, including the request by the Leader of the third Party (Mr. Doer) to join in an environmental case before the Supreme Court of Canada, including my request to join

in a British Columbia case on the Constitution, all were refused to us, and therefore we could come to one and one only conclusion. That is that this Government does not take seriously enough the cutbacks at VIA Rail to use every single avenue at their disposal to plead the case on behalf of Manitobans and on behalf of all Canadians.

Indeed, Mr. Acting Speaker, such a position must be taken. It must be taken not only for historic reasons, although they in and of themselves are sufficient. It must be taken because of the incredible impact on Manitoba, particularly in those individuals who have either lost their jobs or have been dislocated because of the impacts of this cut.

Now we learn of additional problems that will affect Manitoba as a result of the VIA decision. We now learn that as Air Canada did previously, the booking is now to become centralized and will take place all out of Toronto and Montreal and Moncton. No longer will it be available here in Manitoba. What further impacts will that mean on our province in terms of jobs? We have learned also that fares will be substantially increased in overnight accommodations going from The Pas to Churchill. What that will mean is further killing off of this train service, which of course is exactly what the federal Government wants to do.

All we have to do is listen to Brian Mulroney's statement, use it or lose it. That is his scenario of the way in which trains should operate in this nation, and yet when the people showed him that they wanted to use it despite bad equipment, despite poor scheduling, despite breakdowns in trains because of that poor equipment, we learned of course that was not really what he believed. What he really had as his mandate was making the train so difficult to use, either via cost or because of the arrangements one had to make to use and access the train, that the train would virtually disappear.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that is a scenario that the Prime Minister, the same Prime Minister who in 1984 guaranteed increases for VIA Rail, guaranteed that he would restore the once strong national railway system. Not only did he turn his back on his own 1984 mandate, he went far beyond any earlier cuts anticipated, cuts which I objected to at the time and which I still object to.

The problems affecting our national railway began regrettably with its inception in 1977, began because at that particular time not adequate funding was put into the system to make it work. It was doomed to failure. That has been the tragedy of this whole evolution of our trains in this nation.

It seems strange to me that a federal Party and indeed a provincial Party would have lost sight of their first founder, Sir John A. Macdonald, who realized the impact of linking our nation from coast to coast. Sir John A. Macdonald understood the necessity of making our linkages east and west and not north and south.

Our present Prime Minister only understands the dynamic of driving us into north-south connecting links, whether it is the Free Trade Agreement or be it the

weakening of the whole fabric of this nation through the Meech Lake Accord. The present Prime Minister has lost sight of who he is supposed to represent. One believes all too often that his mandate is to represent the President of the United States and not the people of Canada.

* (1510)

Mr. Acting Speaker, there is no good reason for cutting VIA Rail service in our nation. The Premier says of course that it is valid to cut it if in fact it is a bottom-line decision—he said that early in the VIA Rail cuts—but that is only if one fails to compare the costs of other forms of transportation. Whenever we look at the subsidies for VIA, we never take into consideration the subsidies for road traffic, the subsidies for air traffic. Those things are simply ignored.

We have a Government at the federal level and a Government again at the provincial level who would say they are in favour of economic development which has as its benchmark sustainable development. Well, rail traffic is one of the most environmentally safe forms of travel in our nation, yet we have a Government that is prepared to push people on to further road traffic, push people into further air traffic, both of which have higher environmental impacts upon the nation.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I urge this Government to rethink their policy with regard to VIA Rail and to do everything in their power, not just a letter-writing campaign, not just visits to Ottawa, but firm action, accessing through the courts whatever it takes to ensure that we have a living, breathing rail transportation system in our nation.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition):

Mr. Acting Speaker, it is an honour to take part in the debate today, even though I am sure, as all of us feel in this Chamber as western Canadians, the absolute loss that we all must share with the last trip west of the Canadian and the last trip east tomorrow morning of the Canadian railway, the national passenger service on the southern western Canadian line that established much of western Canada.

Many of our forefathers and foremothers, many of the immigrants who built our city and our country in western Canada, came to western Canada, including Winnipeg and Portage and Brandon and other communities, and settled out from the railway system. The history of our region, our history of western Canada, cannot be complete without the key ingredient role of our railways and our public railway system.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I wish the vision that we had in the late last century in building the railways was exhibited in this country now by our federal Government, a vision not just to maintain the railway system and not just to tinker with the railway system, but to look at what other countries are doing in terms of the railway system and develop a modern public transportation system across Canada using the new technology and the new opportunities and the new vision that is being used in so many other countries in this world.

Canada had the vision ahead of the whole world before, Mr. Acting Speaker. Now we have the vision that is opposite to the rest of the world as the rest of the world takes Canadian examples and moves ahead with modernization of a national railway system while we just dismantle it piece by piece, community by community, worker by worker, family by family.

Even Australia, which has the demographics of Canada and the distances of Canada, is building a Sydney to Perth national railway system. They are going a different direction, Mr. Acting Speaker. In the old days, they used to have railway systems that did not fit together. Canada was the example, the shining example to the rest of the world, and now it is going the opposite direction.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think what has happened in the railway system is a national disgrace. It has to be traced back to 13 years ago. The Leader from the Liberal Party talked about 1977 and talked about the way in which the railway was established with lack of equipment. I think it was even more fundamental than that. How did we let the CPR and CNR off their original agreements with the Canadian people? How did we in this country allow companies to get billions and billions and billions of dollars of assets in exchange for a national passenger system and with a stroke of a pen, the stroke of an Order-in-Council pen 13 years ago, allow those companies to break their original deal with the Canadian people?

I say with all sincerity, because I worked on the railway system in a summer job in 1967, that Pierre Trudeau drove 10 spikes into the coffin of the railway system by the way in which we let the CPR and CNR off their original agreements. Do not listen to a NDP Member standing in this House, Mr. Acting Speaker. Look at the Amtrak executives testifying in writing, in Hansard in the federal Parliament, who stated that the conditions that Amtrak had to operate under were one-quarter as onerous as the CPR and the CNR were allowed to escape with when the VIA Rail system was established in 1977.

Then we had, Mr. Acting Speaker, the situation where in 1982, and it has been documented in this Chamber, Jean-Luc Pepin cut 25 percent of the rail services because he had to deal with a bad deal. He was cutting back on top of a bad deal that was started in 1977. Yes, Jean-Luc Pepin was rightly chastised by the New Democrats and the then Opposition Conservatives in the House of Commons right through 1982, right through 1983 and 1984, and lo and behold we had a promise from Don Mazankowski, then in Opposition, and Brian Mulroney in Opposition, to restore the national transportation system and passenger system in western Canada and Atlantic Canada.

Of course, the legacy was status quo from '84 to '88, lots of cutbacks in CNR, some cutbacks in VIA Rail. But then of course after the last federal election we again had massive cutbacks where, depending on whose routes you were using, we were going from 40 trains a week through Winnipeg to 12 trains a week. We were going from 538 employees in Manitoba down to 250 or so employees in Manitoba, Mr. Acting Speaker.

It is not over yet. Anybody who sees the price increases from The Pas to Churchill can see that they

are trying to kill the next leg of our railway system in Manitoba. They are trying to kill and they are going to kill the Churchill route, Mr. Acting Speaker. That is why we are urging this Government to get out of the stands, get onto the rink, get the elbows up with this gang, because it is a rough bunch in Ottawa. They do not care about people in Manitoba communities. They do not care about western Canadian communities anymore. They have lost touch and it is up to us to get our elbows up in this rink of public opinion so that we can fight them most effectively as possible.

Is this a financial decision, Mr. Acting Speaker? No, the federal Government is giving millions and millions of our dollars to Amtrak through Bombardier of Quebec to build railway cars that will take a profit making railway system now in the United States and passengers in the United States.

Is it an economic decision when the federal Government is giving \$780 million Canadian dollars to Thailand for again a Quebec company, Lavalin, to build a railway in Thailand? It is not economic, Mr. Acting Speaker. Both those decisions alone will offset the cutbacks and the alleged, not the actual, savings that will take place with the thousands of families that will lose employment and the thousands of communities that will lose the economic spinoff projected to be \$50 million or \$60 million in Manitoba alone, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Is it an environmental decision, Mr. Acting Speaker? No, every independent environmental group has said that the train is the most effective way, environmentally sound way, to travel in our country, especially a modernized train service which is much more energy efficient than some of the older models that are, quite frankly, still on the tracks and will be environmentally sound.

The decision on Friday is not only a horrible decision, in my opinion, for VIA Rail. It is a horrible decision for law. It says the Order-in-Council dealing with the disestablishment of VIA Rail can supersede the federal environmental Act in terms of the environmental standards and guidelines that we have in this province.

The implications for Rafferty-Alameda and Repap and everything else are extreme with that court decision. I hope the consumer groups and environmental groups appeal that decision, because to have a Cabinet in the back room overrule a decision of the environmental Act that was passed in Parliament is dangerous.

* (1520)

In conclusion, we can go on and on and on, the prices are being raised, the next war, the next battle, has been started, Mr. Acting Speaker. The price from The Pas to Churchill has gone up 50 percent. The battle has begun again. I hope we win these battles. I hope we return the passenger service in western Canada. I hope we protect our northern services. I hope we return sanity to national passenger service.

More than that, out of all of this, I believe we must have a national vision, a national modern vision not the past vision of passenger service, a national public

vision of national transportation and a passenger service that takes into account airlines, cars, roads, environment and the future technology that can be used and embraced in Canada. We should come up with the kind of vision we see in Europe, the kind of vision we see in Asia and the kind of vision we see in Australia. We should come up with a made-in-Canada 1990 vision of a railway service, and I guarantee the New Democrats will be pushing that in every community of Canada. That is why we joined this debate today.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to join this debate on two counts. The first one is the procedural account, because it was with offence that I heard the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) indicate that in voting to support the Speaker's Ruling we were against the jobs in VIA Rail and rail passenger service - (interjection) - and somebody over there in the Liberal Caucus just said absolutely again.

Last week for two days we heard speeches from Members of the Liberal Opposition and indeed Members of the New Democratic Opposition lauding a ruling of the Speaker, wherein he concurred with what they thought was right according to the parliamentary democracy. To a man and a woman in the Liberal Opposition, and the New Democrats who spoke, they lauded the Speaker for being a great parliamentarian, a great leader in this Chamber.

Now today, Mr. Acting Speaker, with regret we have seen those same yesterday parliamentarians in the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party, because they do not like the Speaker's Ruling today, rule against him, vote against him and defeat the Speaker. This is approximately the eighth or ninth time the combined Opposition has joined in tyranny to abruptly break the Rules of this House, the very parliamentary democracy that Wednesday and Thursday they so adamantly tried to defend.

When will you make up your minds in the Liberal Party and be either parliamentarians defending the Speaker and the rulings he makes, instead of just saying, well, today we like the ruling, we support it, tomorrow we do not, we will burn the Speaker? The Speaker of this House, ladies and gentlemen, has to seriously consider resigning one of these times when the combined Opposition defeat a correct ruling by the Speaker. You cannot be parliamentarians and be on both sides of the issue when a Speaker rules, and that is the hypocrisy of particularly the Liberal Party in this House, pure and simple hypocrisy when Wednesday and Thursday they take the time of this House, public time, time in which staff in the various departments waited all day Thursday to debate Estimates, and what did we do? We debated a Speaker's Ruling they liked on Wednesday and Thursday.

Today the Speaker has ruled every bit as correctly as he did on Wednesday, and what are we doing? You can check in the offices of Ministers today and you will find senior staff sitting there waiting for Estimates to commence while this Legislature debates a ruling that my honourable friends in the Liberals and New Democrats have said is a wrong ruling, when parliamentary procedure says it is correct, it always

has been because, Mr. Acting Speaker, this is a federal issue.

The Estimates of the Department of Labour are going on in this House this very day where the issue can be debated. We do not need to waste thousands of dollars of staff sitting, waiting and wondering whether Estimates will proceed. They cannot serve the people of Manitoba when they are waiting in the Minister's office not knowing whether Estimates are going to start.

This is not the first day this has happened. In this Session, I would venture to say there have been at least 20 days when Estimates have been delayed because of the gerrymandering, the tyranny of the two Opposition Parties who want to waste taxpayers' money in the Province of Manitoba. Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, they have to make up their minds as to whether they believe in the Speaker and the parliamentary system. They cannot have it as hypocrites both ways.

Secondly, on the issue of VIA Rail itself, let no Liberal or no New Democrat stand in his place and say as a Progressive Conservative Party in this province that we do not believe in rail passenger services, because I want to tell my honourable friends some of the record that I had some personal involvement prior to the good work of my colleague, the current Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger).

For two years, I sat as the Minister of Transportation for Manitoba, fighting against federal intervention at VIA Rail, starting with Jean-Luc Pepin in the City of Winnipeg at a press conference in the hotel downtown, Portage and Main, Westin. We had a conference there, and Jean-Luc Pepin promised in 1981 to bring us light, rapid and comfortable rail passenger investment in Canada to serve western Canada, LRC it was called, and he broke the Liberal Party of Canada's promise, aided and abetted by none other than Jean Chretien, who this current Liberal Leader in Manitoba wants to be the next Prime Minister of Canada. What absolute hypocrites, Mr. Acting Speaker.

In 1981 I proposed, and it happened under a New Democratic Party administration, railbus experimental service on the Churchill northern line. That was not a new idea of the New Democratic Party, it was an idea commenced in 1981, because we recognized we had to make changes to VIA Rail.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, where are we today? We hear my honourable friend the New Democratic Party Leader (Mr. Doer), saying we need the vision of 100 years ago in rail passenger service. I agree, but 120 years ago, when this country was in its founding stages, we did not have roads and automobiles, we did not have airplanes, we did not have passenger buses. We only had the railroad, and that was the vision that joined this country.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that vision can return, but let not my honourable friend or anybody in the Liberal Party over here today in this Legislature or the New Democratic Party say that instantly you are going to wave a wand and restore passenger service using a comparison of Europe or Asia, because in Europe, as anyone knows, there are nearly 300 million people in

a geographic area slightly bigger than the Province of Manitoba. That means urban, city-to-city rail passenger service. I have used it, and it is excellent. It is based on electricity because they cannot physically transport human beings in Europe any other way. It is not a luxury, it is an absolute necessity.

Now what Canadians have to decide, and they will decide, but they have to decide with all the facts in front of them is, do we want, when my honourable friend the Liberal Health Critic daily or weekly calls upon this Government to spend more money on health care, and we hear the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) saying that soon Canadians are going to have to make decisions on Medicare because the federal Government is reducing their payments to support Medicare in Canada to the provinces, are they going to say, spend on trains and not on hospitals and health care and personal care homes and nursing wages? Is that what they are saying?

The decisions to Canadian people are going to have to be made with all of the facts on the table. If anybody believes in this House, in the Liberal Caucus, that governing on the national scene is an easy job today after having inherited from Pierre Elliott Trudeau himself, Jean Chretien, Lloyd Axworthy and almost every other current Grit in Ottawa, with the exception of Sheila Copps who might be their best leader, straggled and saddled and chained, handcuffed this nation to \$30 billion a year plus in interest alone because of the spending of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Jean Chretien and all the leading hopefuls in the Liberal Party nationally, if anybody in this House believes that their federal counterparts have an answer to that \$30 billion a year of interest on debt accumulated in 15 short years of Liberal malgovernment under Pierre Elliott Trudeau, they are knaves, fools, and deceitful to the people of Canada.

* (1530)

Mr. Acting Speaker, the job of governing this nation is equally as difficult as the job of governing this province, because we inherited \$500 million-plus interest payments annually from the NDP under Howard Pawley in only six and a half years of wanton and wasteful spending.

So when we talk in glowing terms, Mr. Acting Speaker, about the need for rail passenger service, let us ask, who pays? Let us ask, do we borrow the money and drive the interest costs up further as Liberals would have us believe and New Democrats did in this province, or are we going to make passengers pay through the fare system? If we make that public investment, which hospital will you close in Manitoba in return for passenger rail service, because those are going to be the hard choices that none of these people in Opposition are willing to tell the people of Canada and Manitoba honestly about.

Mr. Ed Mandrake (Assiniboia): Mr. Acting Speaker, firstly, I would like to put on record, I wish to thank the Premier and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) for giving Mr. Chretien all the news that he has been getting within the past hour. I think it is very, very commendable, and we thank him very much for that.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I find it very ironic that the Minister of Health, who was a Minister of Transportation in the previous Government in 1981 when it was terminated, few words were ever spoken about VIA Rail. He continued on here talking about cuts and all these other things which are totally irrelevant. Let us get on to the problem of VIA Rail. VIA Rail, it was destined to die. CP sold VIA Rail equipment which in 1977 was 20 years old. There was no doubt in anybody's mind that CP promised this country, they took every dollar they had and they invested it in other places. Today we are saddled with equipment that is totally out of line. I do not understand that, whether it be Jean-Luc Pepin or the present Minister of Transportation. Why do they have to keep their heads in the sand and not see the viability of having new trains in our country?

Mr. Acting Speaker, when the railroad was placed into this country, we had 2.5 million people, and we sustained a railway system. Today we have 25 million people, and we cannot sustain a good, reliable train transportation system, which is very, very environmentally safe.

I was listening with great intent when the Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger) made mention of the fact that he had made 11 submissions to the Minister of Transport in Ottawa. Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I am not exactly sure whether or not we should have gone to the 11. I think after the second one, that is when we should have started raising a little bit of cane. I mean, 11 submissions is totally out of hand.

It is not only that, when we were told that the Minister was going to go to Ottawa on behalf of the Manitoba Government we asked him, the two critics agreed that we would have our names, the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party, on the submission on VIA Rail. Then we asked him whether or not we could accompany him to Ottawa to show support, a unified support for VIA Rail. What did he say? No, you cannot do that. So obviously there is no doubt in our minds that this Minister does not have any clout whatsoever with his federal cousin. A Tory is a Tory is a Tory.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I was completely appalled when I read an article in the Winnipeg Free Press whereby \$100 million was loaned to Amtrak to upgrade their system, \$100 million. If you would have taken that and applied it to our main Canadian, the one that is being cancelled today, we would have a viable and a good, reliable transportation system. It would have been a start. Let us face it, you have to crawl before you walk, and that is the same thing that can go with this national dream of ours, VIA Rail. If they would have put that \$100 million loan toward VIA Rail, we would have had a start and maybe 10 years down the road we would have probably had a very good reliable and efficient transportation system.

I am completely amazed of how this Government seems to say, we support VIA Rail, we are in complete disagreement with the federal Tories, and yet on the weekend my colleagues were out at the Union Station, I was there yesterday. Did anybody, did the Minister himself at least show some compassion for the people of VIA Rail and go out there, at least make an

appearance? No, he was not out there. Nobody was out there. At least we did not see them. This is the way that this Tory Government operates, under complete secrecy.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister tells us that he has been guaranteed the rail line into Churchill for five years. We have seen the escalation in fares to Churchill and it is obvious the writing is on the wall. Within a year's time, I will bet you the Churchill run is going to be cancelled because, if you continue on increasing the rates, there is no doubt what is going to happen. People are not going to be using it.

I find that very, very upsetting, that could this Minister stand in this place and say that VIA Rail is going to be protected and all this, and we find out January 15 nothing has happened, nothing. He is a very incompetent Minister. This is a very incompetent Government. We are more than willing to work with him for the betterment of Manitoba. We are more than willing to work with him, but there is just no way this Government can say that we are not trying.

I gave the Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger) a copy of our submission on the task force which we held with regard to VIA Rail. He never replied as to what he did with it, nothing.- (interjection)- In all probability, like my honourable friend for Springfield says, probably threw it away. Yes, probably so, he probably did throw it away.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in our submission we have always asked for having reliable and good rail transportation services in Canada. We are seeing it destroyed by this Government because it does not have the backbone to stand up to their Tory cousins in Ottawa and say, enough is enough. We will not tolerate this any more. We have had job losses at CN, now we have job losses in VIA Rail, and of course, as our Leader had pointed out, what about the bookings? They are now all going down into the golden triangle. I find this type of attitude by this Tory Government here in Manitoba with a Tory Government in Ottawa is the same.

With those comments, I wish to thank you very much for the time.

* (1540)

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Acting Speaker, this is a very serious issue and one that I am sure all of us want to have an opportunity to speak to.

The real issue is this Government's position. That is why we are debating it in this House. It is this Conservative Government's position on this issue in representing Manitoba's interests and the record that they have displayed over the last number of months when faced with this crisis in our passenger service.

I think the real colours of this Government, the true colours, came through clearly and brilliantly when the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) spoke. Unfortunately, he did not give us the same message that the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger), who has been charged by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) with the responsibility of Transportation in this province and

with representing Manitoba's interests, with spearheading Manitoba's interests—his statements did not reflect the kinds of things that the Minister has been saying at all.

We have never heard the Minister of Highways and Transportation stand up in this House and make excuses as to why this should be happening, why it was okay, why the federal Government should be making these cuts. This Minister of Highways and Transportation says he is opposed. He cites 11 communications that he has had with the federal Minister, or meetings or whatever he says, on behalf of Manitobans.

When the Minister of Health stands up and shows us the true position of this Government, we realize that the federal Conservatives in Ottawa probably just smile quietly and chuckle to themselves when the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) comes forward with the position that he says is the official position and supposedly represents the indignation of Manitobans, because they know he does not really mean it. He may mean it personally, but he is not representing a Government that is meaningfully representing that position, because many of his colleagues in the Cabinet feel that the federal Government is doing the right thing.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) made that abundantly clear when he spoke in this House, when he said what is it going to be, is it going to be rail passenger service or is it going to be hospital beds, that kind of choice. He knows very well that Governments have a responsibility to provide services in all of these areas whether it be education, whether it be health care, whether it be transportation, whether it be in forestry or whatever. There is a broad range, and it is not either/or of those services. These are basic historic services that Canadians and western Canadians have the right to expect.

It is not a choice between hospital beds and trains, but that kind of argument showed the true colours of this Government. I dare say, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) shares those views. I believe he thinks that the federal Government is doing the right thing with VIA Rail despite the fact that we have the historic obligation that they have.

I read something into his statement that was quoted in the Free Press on the weekend about the dire straits of the federal Government, that they are in dire straits, and he can see these transfer payments ending in the future. Now he may have some explanation of how he was quoted or was not quoted, but the fact is I believe that was a veiled support of VIA cuts and GST and other federal decisions, because what he was doing is justifying what they are doing. They are in dire straits, he says.

I can tell you that our Government in Canada and our country of Canada is a wealthy nation. We have a large deficit, but we are not in dire straits in this country. If they were to implement a lower interest rate policy they would immediately eliminate much of that debt that this Minister of Finance says has put this country in dire straits. Therefore, I believe what he is saying is that VIA cuts are necessary and the GST is necessary

and other reductions, punitive decisions that are being made by this federal Government that hurt Manitoba, are necessary.

In fact, that is why the federal Government does not take this Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) seriously when he sends them communications and says we are opposed to this, we are vigorously opposed to this, we are really opposed to this. I do not think that they believe that, and he will have difficulty representing that position, because he does not have the support of his Cabinet colleagues.

That is the issue here in this House. We know that this Minister sent communications, but he has not vigorously led opposition, and he has not vigorously stated to the federal Government that we will not stand for this, we will fight you in every way possible in the courts, in the political field, wherever. Day after day, we will fight this because we believe you are wrong. What he does is does it quietly, and that is why I made the statements that what is happening is that it is the quiet back-door diplomacy, but it is not the kind of action that will get results.

He did not join in the environmental court case that others were fighting on this, the case that they were making that was not honoured by the judge at the particular time. The constitutional challenge that was put forward, he did not support, so I do not believe that they have been trying, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The hypocrisy of the federal Prime Minister is the major issue here as well, when we see this Government with their veiled support for that Conservative Government. They said that they were going to upgrade and rebuild this VIA system. They said that Canadians can demonstrate their desire to maintain passenger service by using it or losing it. Then he turns around and, despite the fact that they use it, he cuts it anyway.

We only have to look at some of the statements made by the Member of Parliament for Winnipeg South, Dorothy Dobbie, when she was involved in a CBC forum when she said that they cut the southern route because it was less feasible, and yet it had 95 percent ridership, usage, 95 percent of capacity. Is there anything wrong with that in terms of its viability? Why was that service cut if it had 95 percent usage?

Canadians were responding, they are using it despite the fact that the Liberal Government of Trudeau left us with a legacy that was doomed to failure, left us with this system that we could call it at that time, antiquated system that was inherited from CN and CP, a system with antiquated equipment, underfunded without a mandate, without a legislative mandate, with high trackage fees to CN and CP. Despite that, it was working. It was working to the extent that 95 percent capacity was the ridership in the last couple of years on that route, on the Canadian, yet they still cut it, so the Prime Minister did not mean what he said when he said use it or lose it.

As a matter of fact, his true colours came out in Indonesia when he made the statement, inadvertently he let slip that he said in Canada we are getting rid of rail passenger service, and then he realized what

he said and he tried to recover from it. That statement was quoted in the press. That is where the true colours are.

The fact is that we in this country have had successive Governments, the Liberal and then the Conservative Governments nationally, who have not been committed to national transportation service and the national dream that built this country, the vision that tied this country together. Surely we can have a passenger service that is viable, but we have to make those expenditures initially for new equipment, for proper funding and proper mandate for the company and then proper marketing so that indeed it will be a viable service for all of us across this country.

It does not have to be thrown out. It is not a case of trains or hospital beds, as the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) says. I regret that the Minister of Health has made that statement because in fact what it does is prove what I felt was the case all along, that this Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) did not have the support of his Cabinet colleagues in his fight against VIA Rail, and that is why it was not meaningful, that is why it was not worth the paper it was written on, and that is all it was, paper, a paper fight. That is what this debate has shown us here this afternoon, and I hope it shows us more. I hope it sends a strong message to Ottawa. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern and Native Affairs): Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise to participate in this debate not unlike my colleague, the Member who spoke, the Minister responsible for Health, the Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard), to touch on two basic issues. I want to make it very clear, Mr. Acting Speaker, how strongly I want this Government on the record, how strongly we support the employees of VIA Rail, the sincere attempt that we have put forward to save their jobs and will continue to save in this whole exercise.

What, Mr. Acting Speaker, has to be pointed out today is the crass arrogance of the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs), supported by the New Democrats, when it comes to the opportunity to gain political points in this Chamber, crass political arrogance, using the Speaker of this Assembly to lever herself and her Party in public opinion. What kind, and I ask the people of Manitoba and this Chamber, what kind of a Premier would that person make, taking opportunities to lever the position of the Liberal Party as it comes to their political betterment? -(interjection)-

* (1550)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): Order, please.

Mr. Downey: It has to be the leadership of the Leaders and the Members of this Legislature if we respect the democratic Speaker, the democratic process under the Speakership and under the activities of this Chamber, that it better start to be shown. It should not continue, Mr. Acting Speaker, the crass arrogance of the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party for their political

benefit. It cannot be tolerated in this type of a society. How many more times do they have to use the Office of the Speaker, and I say, use the Office of the Speaker, and my colleague pointed out very capably, it was to their benefit last week so it was fine to support the Speaker's Ruling. This week it is not to their advantage and they cannot take a ruling, they cannot take a ruling in the interests of this Chamber.- (interjection)-

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): Order, please.

Mr. Downey: —in the interests of this Chamber and the democratic system. They did not support the Speaker, because he did make the right ruling, as he made last week and was supported by this Chamber. So you have to ask the question, how are you going to carry out the activities if you were ever to govern? Will you show the same disrespect for the Office of the Speaker at that time? -(interjection)- Well the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) said yes. What kind of a system will we have under that kind of leadership.

I ask the Members of the Legislature, all of them on the Opposition benches, to ask themselves, really did they do the right thing when it comes to the support of this Chamber and the way it is normally carried out? Do not belay it all the time when it is wrong to do so. Stand up, be Members who represent your constituents.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think it is an extremely important thing that we have to deal with here. How many more times do they anticipate having to use the Speaker's Office for their own political advantage? The public cannot be fooled any longer and you will be called for the activities day after day as to the way in which you are frustrating the House and trying to lever your own political advantage.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we cannot ignore that any longer in this Chamber, the public cannot ignore it any longer what is happening in this Chamber. That is the first point I want to make.

Let me again re-emphasize what the Speaker said, if they were listening. We had the opportunity in the Labour Estimates to deal with the people who are being disrupted from their jobs in VIA Rail. That could have been going on in committee at this particular time. How sincere was the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) in his questions about the welfare or the social services support programs that he asked questions of my colleague from Family Services? It was nothing more than shallow political posturing by the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose). He did not give a damn about those people, he just cares about his own political posturing, and that is all he is doing by participating and allowing this debate to go on. That is what he is doing. He does not give a damn, he does not give a darn about his constituents, he does not give a darn.

POINT OF ORDER

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): The Member for St. James, on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): As much as we know the Minister loves to go on tirades like this, the fact

is he has very definitely imputed motive for a question asked by the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) earlier today. I would ask him to withdraw. He has made clear allegations that the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) does not have the purest motives in bringing forward concerns to the Minister, concerns I might add which the Minister had no idea how to answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): We will take this under advisement and have a ruling on it. I thank the Honourable Member.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, let me show the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) and the Members opposite that they can in fact do an honourable thing. I do apologize and I did not intend to impute motives. I do not intend to challenge you on any ruling that comes from it. I am quite prepared to stand up front and be honest and open about it, something that the Party opposite cannot do in their endeavours to try to maneuver some political leverage out of the Speaker's Office.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Acting Speaker, let us deal with the New Democratic Party's how sincere they are and nothing ever went wrong. What happened to the Minister of Highways' budget that Member for Dauphin who is so hypocritically putting a case forward for VIA Rail, continually shutting down or cutting back on monies that went into the Highways Estimates, year after year after year, building bridges without any road to them, absolutely totally wasting the taxpayers' money while at the same time -(interjection)- yes, paving roads to his cottage.

Even more importantly, what kind of cold comfort did the 800-and-some employees of Canada Packers get from the New Democratic Party when they closed that plant? Absolutely none, because of the failure of their policies to encourage the packing house industry to stay in this province. Eight hundred-and-some people got the cold notice of having to lose their jobs, and what did they do about it? Absolutely nothing, as they did when they took the RCMP from the communities that so desperately need it. That is the kind of administration and that is the kind of hypocrisy that we are seeing come from those individuals.

It is fine to stand here today as politicians and, yes, make our speeches railing against the federal Government, but what is the record of the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan)? What is the record of the Members, of the Liberal MPs from Winnipeg when it comes to this issue in Ottawa? Did they introduce an emergency debate in the House of Commons? Did they? No, they did not. Why did they not? Did the Liberal Member not phone the MPs from western Canada, from Winnipeg? Did the Members from Dauphin and the Leader of the NDP phone Rod Murphy and say, introduce an emergency measures debate in the House of Commons? Well, why did they not? I want them to tell us why they did not.

Why did they not go through the normal channels of talking to their MPs and telling them what they think?

Did they? No, they did not. They had to come to this Chamber to take advantage of the Speaker's Office. In fact, I think it is going to show before this debate is over just how shallow the Members opposite really are and the arrogant lust for power from the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs).

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to conclude my remarks by saying today, yes, it is an extremely serious matter that the VIA Rail will be cut back, yes, it is more extremely concerning that members of the VIA Rail organization will lose their jobs. We are not happy. We do not like it, and we will fight every inch of the way. We will fight effectively, not for the crass, arrogant purposes that the Leader of the Liberal Party put forward for her own political benefit on the backs of people who have been laid off from VIA Rail. I take no pleasure in that, no pleasure at all. I want to work effectively to help those individuals maintain their jobs and to fulfill what is rightfully theirs in opportunity in society, to take on those opportunities.

* (1600)

For the North, Mr. Acting Speaker, I have never heard one suggestion from the New Democratic Party who claim to have such a claim to fame for supporting those people, one iota of talking of furthering hydro services for the North and/or transportation that is more permanent than they have had in the past. I believe the Conservative Party has demonstrated and will demonstrate support for the people of this province.

Mr. Edwards: It was certainly with some interest and, I might add, amusement that I have listened to the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey) say, in effect, that this debate is a shallow debate.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister I am sure on reflection when he, if he does, reads his own remarks will see that his debate is the shallowest to date on this issue. He spent his full time not talking about the analytical reasons that his Tory cousins in Ottawa are cutting VIA Rail, a national institution, cutting away services vital to many, many thousands of Canadians, no, not one word about that from the Minister. Rather the Minister chooses to turn this debate into exactly what he criticizes. That is the kind of political rhetoric which that Minister has become famous for.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the two Ministers whom we have heard from so far from the Government on this issue have seen fit to spend a portion of their debate criticizing this Party for bringing forward this debate affecting Manitobans and indeed on behalf of Canadians who are losing VIA Rail due to the Tory cousins of this Government in Ottawa.

Let me just leave one comment about those Ministers levelling that allegation. Let them tell this House how many dozens of times that Government, when it was in Opposition, challenged the Speaker. That fact is the fact which has been conspicuously absent from their debate thus far. I look forward to another Minister - (interjection)-

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for St. James.

Mr. Edwards: The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) seems to be having a little tirade from his seat, giving what he has become famous for in this province and that is his patent arrogance on almost every issue. He says from his seat you will never see the inside of a Cabinet room, as if he has the lock and key to that position. In an age when dictators are being thrown out all over the world, we seem to have one here in Manitoba who is a bit frustrated at his inability to become the Premier of this province.

Let me go on to say that I look forward to a Minister, or indeed a representative from the Government, coming forward today with how many times they have challenged the Speaker in their tenure as Opposition in this province and indeed even in the last decade, in the last six years. They burned the Speaker, made their intention clear to burn the Speaker, because they did not have the votes. Because they did not have the votes, they could not do it. The fact is, that is just because they were a minority Government. They sure would - (interjection)- the Member for Pembina, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), seems to be indicating from his seat that he enjoyed, he was happy that they were the minority in the past Government. Political desperation makes for very strange bedfellows, very strange indeed.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): Can I have order, please? I have recognized the Honourable Member for St. James. Order, please.

Mr. Edwards: As I was growing up in Swift Current, Saskatchewan—and I am going to take this opportunity and just a minute or two of my time to inform Honourable Members of my experience as a Canadian growing up in very close proximity to the train tracks in which the major link in the town I grew up in was indeed the Canadian which came through. The town I grew up in, Swift Current, has now been axed from the VIA transportation routes. It was a place - (interjection)- the Member for Pembina wants to continue to make light of this. The fact is that the train is a significant emotional and psychological attachment for many, many thousands, if not millions of Canadians.

I am going to get to an analytical thing, argument, which was left out by both of these Ministers with respect to why VIA Rail is in fact not a net loss situation for this Government and in fact should have been saved. It is not going to be the wonderful cost-saver that the Government in Ottawa seems to think it will be.

Let me start by indicating what I think was the crux of the legal arguments which were made. That was that VIA Rail and passenger rail service in Canada was a commitment made many, many years ago when this country was first formed. It was the link that bound the country, a country with relatively sparse population throughout a lot of its breadth, yet the train linked those people in a common goal. That goal was coast to coast to coast.

Sometimes I think in the City of Winnipeg, unless one has grown up here through a railroading family, it

is often difficult to feel that attachment to the railroad itself, and more difficult than it is if you have grown up in a small town where the railway and the passenger service is really a focal point for much of the community.

I can recall on summer evenings in the town I grew up in, simply going down to watch the Canadian as it came in, in the evening. In fact, there were dozens of people who would make that a part of their nightly walk. They would go and simply look for the train to arrive. It was that link, it was a feeling that bonded the country from coast to coast to coast, as I have said.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I leave those comments simply on the record to indicate that I think that this emotional and psychological attachment to the railway is felt by many thousands and indeed millions of Canadians as I have said. It certainly is not lost on me.

Mr. Acting Speaker, going on to the jobs which are being lost in this province and the so-called millions of dollars which are going to be saved by this Government, I would submit that they start from incorrect assumptions and that they have made arguments which do not hold water. It is precisely the arguments which are needed to contradict their arguments which have not been forthcoming from this Government.

What we have looked for from the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) and indeed the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is a logical, persuasive argument which can be taken to the federal Tories to show that this is not going to be the cure-all that the federal Government seems to think it will be. That analysis, which would have shown I believe that it is indeed in the long-term interests economically of this country to preserve a viable passenger transportation system in this country, was not made by this Minister or this Premier. Despite their many letters and their many representations and all full of fanfare and rhetoric and the many times that we hear that they spoke with their federal counterparts, those facts never seem to have been determined.

It is for that reason that I question the real desire on the part of this Government to actually have an effect in Ottawa. On the other hand, Mr. Acting Speaker, even had they had the real desire to have an effect, I might add that they have said that in the past, with respect to the Kapyong Barracks closures and the Portage la Prairie Barracks closures and the many times that the federal Government has seen fit to slam this province, and they have had absolutely no effect.

We must surely come to the conclusion that this Government really has no ability to have any influence in Ottawa and has yet again proven that despite who you elect in this province from the Conservative ranks, they simply cannot do the job in Ottawa with Mr. Mulroney in power.

Mr. Acting Speaker, might I ask how much time I have left remaining?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): One minute.

Mr. Edwards: Let me conclude then by indicating that it is for lack of a full analysis on the part of this

Government that I support today this emergency debate. I very much look forward to the Government coming forward with the kind of analysis and statistics which should have been forthcoming back last June when the cuts were first made public and which can hopefully send the message to Ottawa that it is neither in their interests in terms of the electorate in this country, but neither is it in the interests of their pocketbook to go through with these massive cuts which send many Canadians out of well-paying jobs and indeed, as I have said, attack what I consider to be the very fabric of this country. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.-(interjection)-

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): Order, please; order, please. I have recognized the Honourable Member for St. Johns.

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (St. Johns): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am pleased for the opportunity to participate in this debate which we believe is a critical issue facing all of us today. This is not a frivolous debate. This is not showing any disrespect for the Speaker of this Chamber. This is an attempt to raise to the highest level possible in this province and in this country the critical nature of this issue and to try at this last hour to see if there is some way we can get the Government of the Day here in this province off of its seat of inaction and joining with workers and citizens right across this province and country to preserve that which is necessary and right in our society today.

* (1610)

I find it quite interesting to hear the Members of the Conservative Government talk today in terms of procedure, refuse to address the issue, suggest that it could be dealt with at Estimates when in fact it is because of the inaction of this Government that we are forced today to engage in an emergency debate. Keep in mind, it is this Government here in the Province of Manitoba that has refused to take any decisive action dealing with these serious cuts across this country.

It is this Government here today that has refused to engage in any kind of court action on constitutional or environmental grounds. As a result, we are forced to raise this issue in the only arena possible and uphold our rightful duties as responsible legislators in the Province of Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the crisis is a real one. There is no doubt about it. Let us look in terms of the thousands of jobs and rail passenger service to hundreds of communities which are cut today. Mr. Acting Speaker, it is not frivolous to talk about the 1,800 jobs being cut across this country or the 150-plus jobs cut here in the Province of Manitoba. The impact on those individual workers, on the families of those workers and the communities in which those workers live will be devastating, to say the least. It is a crisis of the highest proportions and must be raised to the highest levels in this province and in this land.

We have heard time and time again about the impact of this cutback to VIA routes, to passenger rail service in this country in terms of jobs. We know the devastating

impact it will have in terms of convenient, sensible transportation from community to community. It is a shocking disgrace for this country to be now faced with a situation where the Atlantic is left without regional service, where transcontinental service is cut in half, where the Canadian service is eliminated, leaving the southern prairies without rail service. To see those kinds of cutbacks, to see this total destruction of our passenger service in the country is an abomination and must be addressed by all of us.

I hope in the ensuing hours that this debate will be taken very seriously and we will all devote our attention to the crisis that this serious cutback means in terms of lives of workers and families, in terms of transportation between communities, and in terms of that which is at the utmost importance for all of us, that of national unity, that of our national dream, not a national nightmare that we are faced with today. Mr. Acting Speaker, the crisis we are dealing with today is a result of mismanagement of passenger rail service over many, many years.

Let there be no misunderstanding today in this House that even though we may stand and support a motion put forward by the Liberal Opposition in this Legislature, we are under no illusion about the part the Liberals across this country have had to play in terms of the deterioration and destruction of our rail line service today in Canada. Mr. Acting Speaker, let us not forget the role that Liberal Governments have played on this issue in this area over a long period of time. Let us not forget specifically that it was in 1981 that the Liberal Government of the Day embarked on a 20 percent cut of our rail line passenger service in Canada.

(Mr. Ed Helwer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

I am under no illusions about the politics of the day. While we support the motion, I also understand very clearly the hypocrisy of the Liberal Party in bringing forward a motion at this time in the history of this country. As many have said over and over again, but let me quote specifically from the Winnipeg Free Press on January 13, 1990: "Canada's VIA Rail experiment once again proved the obvious: Neglect and mismanage a public service long enough and the people will stop using it. The Amtrak experiment in the United States proves the corollary: Improve a public service and manage it carefully and the public will climb aboard."

Mr. Acting Speaker, I found it very interesting to hear the Minister of Health's (Mr. Orchard) comments in this debate, because up until this point we had been under some illusion that there was some concern on the part of the Government about these cutbacks. The Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) has in fact, although weakly and fairly quietly, suggested his concern about those cutbacks.

I refer specifically to an article back in October of this year, this past year, where the Minister of Transportation did express concerns, and said that Ottawa should postpone its proposed cuts to VIA Rail Canada until a federal inquiry had a chance to examine the effects. We obviously know the impact of that suggestion, but we were still under some illusion that

there was some concern on the part of the Government. However, today, it has become clear, the true agenda of the Conservative Government in Manitoba. With the Minister of Health's comments, he has put clearly on the record their support for this kind of cutback and has done so in using very frivolous, very facile, and very fallacious arguments in making his case.

It is absolutely incredible to us in this Chamber to hear the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), and presumably other Members in the Conservative benches, suggest that the options are cutting rail line services or cutting health care.

Mr. Acting Speaker, give us a break. We have seen nothing but cutbacks from Tories at all levels on all of those fronts. We are not talking about an either/or situation. Conservative Governments, provincially or federally have embarked upon a series of cutbacks on all of those fronts and there has been no concern, no concern whatsoever, about saving money on one end to preserve our health care, education and social service systems in this country. In fact, if the Minister of Health is so interested in looking at areas for finding the money to preserve our rail passenger service in Canada, he need not look further than his own counterparts in Ottawa, where they are spending considerable money to develop rail line service in other countries.

I refer specifically to a letter from the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Benoit Bouchard, where he clearly states that the Export Development Corporation is offering to loan the Government of Thailand \$800 million to develop rail service in that country. This loan offer is in conjunction with Lavalin's international bid to build a 36-kilometre rail system in Thailand.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we do not oppose supporting developments in other countries but clearly, if there is that kind of resource and financial ability to support railway systems in other countries, then we must have the wherewithal, if there is the political commitment, to do that in our own country, in Canada.

We have heard time and time again, Mr. Acting Speaker, the arguments about making these kinds of cutbacks. All of those arguments have to be dealt with. If time permitted, I would go over them very quickly. I believe I have about five minutes left, if that is correct? Two minutes? Time goes quickly.

I certainly think it is important throughout the rest of this debate to look at the fact that so many Conservatives in this country have said that nobody takes the train and are not using it and, therefore, they are going to lose it and it is their responsibility for this loss. Obviously, all of the statistics show the opposite, give the opposite message, with an incredible increase in passenger service in the last year. The statistics I will not put on the record, but I am sure all Members are familiar with them, and the arguments go on.

Let me conclude, Mr. Acting Speaker, by putting this whole debate and this crisis in a human context, and refer to an article that was in The Globe and Mail, written by Mark Gerson, and it was entitled: "Last Stop For the Canadian—VIA Derails a Scenic Wonder" and he, in talking to people who were using the train

when he was on it, made the following comments: "Some were like me, fulfilling a long-held dream to take the legendary rail journey while it was still possible. Others refused to fly or could not afford to, yet others simply preferred to travel by train. Whatever their reasons, they just about filled the train going both ways. For one fellow passenger, a 27-year-old new Canadian from Hamburg, West Germany, it was the best way to see and understand his adopted country. He was right, of course. There is no better way to experience the size of a place than to spend three days and cross three zones travelling through it."

Just to conclude, Mr. Acting Speaker, he concludes that every child should be given one free ticket to ride this train, and I want to conclude—

* (1620)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Helwer): Order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Helwer): Order, please. The Honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Helwer): Order, please; order, please. I have recognized the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is to be regretted that the Opposition has chosen to so blatantly disregard a Speaker's Ruling that the Speaker had absolutely no choice in making but the ruling that he made. It is regrettable that this is coming from an Opposition that just last week took two days out—and correctly, I might add—to spend considerable amount of time about the importance of upholding the tradition, parliamentary democracy, role of all of us Members in adhering to that, the importance of the Rules that we have.

Why did the Speaker have no choice in ruling as he did on this matter? There are so many obvious ones, even those who have not that much time in this House, but certainly all of us have had enough time in this House to understand and to accept them. Subject matters not of our jurisdiction, that in itself does not always rule out a matter, but certainly in this instance that alone was reason for the Speaker ruling as he did.

Coming as the request came, after the fact, there are sometimes grounds, and we have sometimes taken the Rules or so interpreted the Rules of this Chamber to have debates of one kind or another if—and this is always the important part of it—there was some hope, some chance of changing the outcome, altering the course of a perceived or a specific action that was being contemplated by a Government.

Mr. Acting Speaker, as we have all been made painfully aware, all of us, the action that we are debating here has taken place. People are out of their jobs today. Trains are not starting to run anymore today, or some just concluding their operations, so on that matter alone it is a reason for ruling the debate not acceptable.

I leave it to the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger), who has on innumerable occasions responded to questions in this House as to this Government's position, this Government's concern, and this Government's action, the only action open to us with respect to registering our objections, with respect to at the very highest level, in successive ministerial meetings, meetings that included a large number of people, including Opposition Members, including trade union representatives, including Chambers of Commerce, that clearly spelled out the position of the provincial Government with this whole matter.

Again, if there was the slightest doubt, if there was room for Members opposite to say that these efforts had not been undertaken, then perhaps a Speaker leaning backwards may have ruled this debate in order. No, Mr. Acting Speaker, and if you know our Speaker who is a cautious Speaker, if there is difficulty in coming to a decision, he often takes the additional time to confer with his staff, to confer with the Clerk, very often will take under advisement certain rulings. The evidence was so clear and so plain it took but a moment for him to come to the only decision that he could come to, and rule this debate out of order.

If we had responsible Opposition in this Chamber, they would have accepted that ruling. They would have achieved what they were hoping to do, draw further political attention to themselves by this action, but they would have, at that point, the Speaker having ruled, accepted the Speaker's Ruling. They would have been on record for having requested the emergency debate. That was not good enough for the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) or for the New Democrats.

She knows full well, Members of the Opposition know full well, it costs thousands and thousands of dollars a day to operate this Chamber. She was quite prepared to waste those thousands and thousands of dollars if she thought she could add to the credits of the Liberal Party in doing so. She knew, as do all Honourable Members know, that nothing we say this afternoon today will alter the facts, will alter the decision that the federal Government has made. What is there to be gained? Simply a little bit of politics at the cost of thousands of dollars.

I personally am disappointed in particularly the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs), because I can recall when she was a lone voice in this House, after the '86 election. She would repeatedly remind us, then the Conservative Party, who was the Official Opposition, and the New Democratic Party, who were the Government, that we ought not to engage in this kind of petty politicking at the expense of the general taxpayers, that she would bring a different style of Opposition, she said, when indeed she became after the '88 election, the Official Opposition.

I believe a great number of Manitobans looked forward and expected after a decade—no, Mr. Acting Speaker, just about 15 years of harshly polarized politics in the Province of Manitoba, conservative versus socialist, the Liberal Party as represented by the now Leader of the Opposition held out a hope for a more balanced, for a more responsible Opposition and tactics in this Chamber. How quickly she has lost sight of those

ambitions, how quickly she has glommed onto the very political practices that she used to piously criticize other Parties in this Chamber for carrying out. That is what we are seeing here today, because it is simply politics.

Mr. Acting Speaker, on the question of railways, successive Governments, not hers or the Liberal Party's, but certainly both, and I include the New Democratic Party Governments, have realized the importance of rail and rail lines in Manitoba. In the early 70s, it was primarily freight lines that were being threatened and indeed abandoned. I can recall—

An Honourable Member: By whom?

Mr. Enns: By whom? A Liberal Government, and I might add a Liberal Government supported for a period of years by the NDP when David Lewis supported that minority Government, by Mr. Turner, by Mr. Chretien, by Mr. Jean-Luc Pepin. We fought a vanguard action in Manitoba supported by our grain organizations, Manitoba Pool and individual farm organizations principally, because it was rural rail lines that were being abandoned. Successive Ministers of Highways and Transportation, and I was one of them—the current Minister of Health was another one of them—fought these battles to attempt to delay or to attempt to receive at least some counter-contribution in terms of the added costs to our transportation system that abandoned rail lines would impose on our Manitoba taxpayers.

(Mr. Neil Gaudry, The Acting Chairman, in the Chair)

Mr. Acting Speaker, that is such a well-documented position and one that has been carried out even more vigorously by the present Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) that one really has to stretch the bounds of imagination to attempt to in any way suggest that this Minister of Transportation, this Government has not taken every, every opportunity to voice its concerns, has not allied itself with political Members opposite, with private organizations, with organized labour, in meeting and confronting the federal Minister, the federal Government, in voicing our concerns and voicing our objections. That is all a fact, and we all know that.

So then why are we not getting on with utilizing those thousands of dollars that it costs to run this place in examining the Estimates of my colleague the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) or the Department of Labour and get on with these other things, as the Minister of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition suggested—

* (1630)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): Order, please. Time has expired. Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for Springfield.

Mr. Gilles Roch (Springfield): Mr. Acting Speaker, I see the Members from the Government benches are getting all riled up again, especially the Members some of whom said on the record they were going to vote against the Speaker's Ruling last week, if I recall correctly, and then conveniently did not show up for the vote, four of them. One of them just simply switched chairs.

Mr. Acting Speaker, -(interjection)- Yes, we should name them again—the Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard), the Member for Arthur (Mr. Downey), the Member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon) and the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns). They refused to show up for the vote.

The issue here is not the Speaker's Ruling. That is simply a red herring used by the Government Members - (interjection)- well, obviously they have limited comprehension.

An Honourable Member: That figures.

Mr. Roch: I did not say what the vote was on, I said the issue. The issue here is not the Speaker's Ruling. It is a red herring used by Government Members to try and disassociate themselves from the fact that all Conservatives are in favour of these VIA Rail cutbacks. That is why they are trying to divert attention, because the Members know full well that by unanimous consent the Speaker would not have had to rule at all. By unanimous consent, this House can do whatever it likes. If they are in fact opposed to these Conservative VIA Rail cuts -(interjection)-well, the Members opposite say—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gaudry): Order, please; order, please. I have recognized the Honourable Member for Springfield.

An Honourable Member: So have the constituents of Springfield, and they want to get at him.

Mr. Roch: The Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) makes comments. Will he run where he lives? I doubt it. At least the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) hopes not.

In any case, let us get back to the issue here. The issue here is the VIA Rail cutbacks, not the Speaker's Ruling. As the Members know full well, the Speaker has not been burned. We have the same Speaker here that we have had since July of 1988, the very same Speaker. We did not burn him, we have overturned his ruling.

The Speaker is one Member of the Legislature who was elected by his fellow colleagues in the Legislature to chair the proceedings. Sometimes we agree to his rulings and sometimes we do not. That is the right of the people here. Just like last week, the Members opposite did not agree with his ruling, but they figured that the optics would not look very well if they decided to oppose the Speaker's Ruling at that point. As a matter of fact, some of them refused to show up for the vote because of that.

No, let us not let the Government Members hide behind this red herring of the Speaker's Ruling to very thinly disguise the fact that deep down inside I do not believe that they are opposed to the VIA Rail cutbacks because, if they truly had been opposed to the VIA Rail cutbacks, they would have given unanimous consent to debate this issue today. They did not want to debate, because they felt it was not important.- (interjection)-

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) has been accusing various Opposition Members of being hypocritical. I believe he is the one who is being hypocritical.

The fact is that I sat on a VIA Rail task force that travelled throughout the province. Several people made presentations, Brandon, Dauphin, Thompson—this is just the Manitoba task force—all in favour of supporting VIA. No one came forward and said they wanted VIA cut back -(interjection)- but the Members opposite do not even want to debate. This may be our last chance, our last possible opportunity to point out what is an error, to hopefully change the minds of the Conservatives in cutting back VIA Rail. Yet, this Conservative Government did not even want to grant us that opportunity. So let not the issue of the Speaker's Ruling divert attention from that.

The fact is that the federal Government is in the process of tearing apart, has torn apart to a certain degree, what has become a national institution. The purpose of the railways in the first place was to unite this country from sea to sea. It is kind of ironic that after 100 years later, after it was given the last spike, we are about to see the final nail in the coffin of the passenger rail service in this country.

Reference was made by other speakers earlier to passenger train service in the United States and in Europe. It is not that long ago that in the United States passenger rail service was facing the same situation that the passenger trains face in Canada today. Did they decide to abandon it? No. The federal American Government invested money, made it a workable proposal. There was no talk of use it or lose it, as we have heard here. As it turns out, it was use it and lose it.

In Europe, train travel is used extensively. The fact is -(interjections)- Well, Ministers opposite are making comments from their seats. If everyone who rides the train in Europe were to use alternative modes, there would be dire consequences because of their heavy population. Even out here the train, if we, given the abundance—this Government likes to sign electricity deals. The trains in Europe, Mr. Acting Speaker, all run on hydro-electric power, making them energy efficient and indeed environmentally friendly.

Mr. Acting Speaker—

An Honourable Member: They are not hydro-electric, they are thermal-electric.

Mr. Roch: Well, the Member for Morris (Mr. Manness) says they run on thermal-electric. I was referring to in Canada they would be using hydro-electricity.

Mr. Acting Speaker, to do away with the trains in this country is not only doing away with a mode of transportation which is economically viable, energy efficient and environmentally friendly, it is also, as my colleague from St. James and others have pointed out, taking away a very emotional method of transportation for many people. The trains were the ones which were the first mode of transportation to unite this country from coast to coast. The trains have a symbolic heritage

for many people in this country and indeed in this province.

* (1640)

Mr. Acting Speaker, this is a direct consequence of the night of the April 26, 1989 Conservative budget that the train, the VIA Rail passenger service, is being cut from this country. It is a sad day for Canadians, it is a sad day for Manitobans, indeed it is a sad day for any thinking person to see the trains go by. I hope when this debate ends that the people, the Conservatives, especially in central Canada, will have listened to the people across the country and say, no, but we will listen, we will invest the necessary funds, and in the future we can turn the corner and make passenger rail transportation a viable mode of transportation once more. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): I too would like to take a few moments and add a few comments to the emergency debate that is before the House today dealing with the VIA Rail cutback. Mr. Acting Speaker, I also want to say that some people are misinterpreting what has happened with the Speaker. Working in a democratic system like we do, we are not burning the Speaker. There are times that we feel that there is a debate that has to take place and we as a House decide that debate should take place.

I think there are some benefits already that have come from this debate taking place. The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), who clearly indicated from his seat on several occasions, what do you want, do you want to cut hospital beds or do you want to be cutting the transportation system? Clearly, when this Cabinet is taking their fight to Ottawa, they are doing it in a half-hearted way.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), in his article in the newspaper over the weekend, is really conditioning the people in this province for cutbacks, and I think indirectly he also is supporting the federal Conservative Party in the cutback they are taking. He is saying, what options do we have? We have to be cutting some of those services that many people feel are a right of Canadians, and it was a right of Canadians when we first built the national dream. The transportation system bound this nation together. I think the effects of these cuts now are going to have a devastating effect on the whole unity of the country.

I speak as a person who has travelled on VIA Rail extensively. I know that there have been many -(interjection)- The Tories are also worried about the number of times I used the passes. When I was an employee of VIA Rail, I did use the pass. If there was any way of checking, I can tell you that I used that many times. I travelled on the railroad many times prior to my becoming an employee of CN. I travelled to eastern Canada many, many times. When I worked in the mine in Sudbury, Ontario, I travelled back to western Canada on my holidays, I travelled by CN. It was not VIA Rail at that time, it was CN, and I travelled by CN.

You do not need to worry about me travelling only when I had the free pass. I presently have -(interjection)-

The Minister of Finance wants to get up and speak next. Maybe we will have true confessions come up when the next speaker gets up. Then we will say how they really did not defend Manitoba's position very strongly because he really wanted the federal Government to salvage the way they were handling the finances so they would have some money to give to Manitoba. Maybe we will have some true confessions when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) gets up and speaks on this subject.

The Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) wants to know if I still have a pass. Yes, for the sake of the Minister of Labour, I still do have a pass, but I unfortunately do not have an opportunity to use it now because of the scheduling, and that is one of the difficulties with VIA Rail, because the schedule is so slow it takes too long to travel by rail, and therefore it takes 14 hours for me to get to The Pas. Therefore, we have to modernize the equipment that VIA Rail has. When they modernize the equipment, then there will be more people utilizing it.

That is also something that is not quite correct either, because last summer I had a call from a constituent of mine who complained that he could not make any reservations to go to eastern Canada. I said, I cannot believe that with all of the figures that are coming out that nobody is using the rail line, then surely you must be able to get on. I called VIA Rail and I did not tell them that I was travelling by pass. I called and said that I needed to get to Montreal, and I could not get reservations for more than three weeks.

Therefore, there were people travelling on VIA Rail. Despite the fact that the schedule takes a long time for people to get there, the people still travel by rail. I think it is because they get an opportunity to see this country of ours, the beauty of it not only on the prairies or travelling across northern Ontario. There are many scenic views that I think that some people who have not had the opportunity to travel via rail have missed, the beauty of northern remote areas.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it is kind of ironic that the VIA Rail this year would choose to cut back in their services to a remote area like Pukatawagan where, in an isolated area, that is the only means of land transportation they have; VIA Rail would cancel their services during the Christmas period, where people could not get into an isolated place like Pukatawagan or get out of it. Sure, some of the people might have travelled beforehand and got into Pukatawagan for Christmas Day, but on Boxing Day is when the people would have been travelling out and, because they cancelled it on Christmas Day, it was also cancelled on Boxing Day. I think it is unfortunate that they would choose to use that type of scheduling.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think it is unfortunate that this Cabinet did not carry our fight very forcefully and very clearly from the people who got up and spoke. It is clear that they have another agenda in mind and have other financial concerns in place, so they are not worried about VIA Rail. It would have been interesting to sit in and listen when the Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger) from the Province of Manitoba met with Bouchard and saw how forceful he was in his argument

that VIA Rail needs to be protected for the sake of maintaining a credible transportation system in Canada we need to carry on. I am sure they gave it a half-hearted effort.

I have talked to several people who have been in European countries of France and Germany and the Soviet Union in the last little while, and they will share with you how efficient the public transportation system is in that area. The trains, because of their investment in equipment, are extremely efficient. They are on time. I think the employees here do a good job with the equipment they have, but unfortunately the equipment they have has not been upgraded for many years. Therefore, there is a need of capital investment of the federal Government to bring the equipment up to a level where it can provide that service, where they can be competing with the bus service. With the equipment they have now, it is not possible to be travelling at a speed where they can be competing with other forms of land transportation.

We could go and have a look at what is happening in Japan and the land transportation there. They have an excellent -(interjection)- and sure, they say, how many people? It is true their people are in a much smaller area. There are many more people, but we should be looking at what they have for a transportation system. They have made a great capital investment in equipment and also in a roadbed which is in much better condition than what we have here in Canada.

We need a transportation system for transporting of goods. Surely our roadbeds could also be in much better condition than they are, and we should be looking at what is happening in the Soviet Union, in Japan and in some of the other countries and see what they doing.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I regret that I have heard three previous Cabinet Ministers here defending in a half-hearted way, so I am anxious to hear the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), who is going to be standing up next, and I hope he is a little more defensive of the fight they put up with Ottawa than the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) or the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) was.

* (1650)

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on this. I can only characterize this debate so far as a pathetic debate. I am sure I am not going to add that much to it to raise it beyond that standard, but let me say first of all, what we have here is an obvious fact that the Opposition is bereft, is bankrupt of ideas and has no other agenda in which to put forward to the people of the Province of Manitoba. I have been challenged to give greater explanation as to my comments in the paper the other day, talking about the federal fiscal matter. I will do that in due course. Unfortunately I do not have the time today.

Mr. Acting Speaker, how many issues have the Opposition over the course of the last number of months raised that are strictly provincial issues? I continue to hear these. I continue to hear VIA which we are

discussing today, no doubt an important issue but nevertheless certainly one outside of the mandate and outside the responsibility of the provincial Government. We continue to hear about the goods and services tax, we hear about unemployment insurance changes and of course we hear about high interest rates. All important issues, nobody can argue that. Certainly on the high interest rate issue, I can tell you I could launch off into a half-hour attack on the federal Government, on Mr. Crow, on that issue alone. Nevertheless, this is not the reason that we have been brought to this forum, sent here by our constituents at this point in time. What is obvious is that the Opposition, collectively, virtually have no provincial issues on which to attack this Government, and so what we see is a desperate Opposition who chooses to attack us on federal issues.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I can be as sentimental with respect to VIA or as to changes within railroading in this nation as any Member of this Legislature. I did not grow up on a main line but I can tell Members opposite I grew up within a stone's throw of the La Rivière subdivision, put there by the CPR in 1881. I remember the steam locomotives and I remember the freight cars. I remember the cream cans going up and down and I can remember the paper being thrown out, because I was a carrier boy for The Winnipeg Tribune. I can be as sentimental about railroading as any Member in this House. I can remember the station agent and how he taught me about how he used Morse code of the day, and how he admonished me for putting pennies and pebbles on the track and everything, and probably pulling me off the track two or three times.-(interjection)-

That is right, I did it all and that is part of my growing up and part of my sentimental history of railroading in this nation. These memories are important to me and I know they are important to Members of this House, but people in my area decided they would rather use the highways and the road system. I do not know why they did, but they did, Mr. Acting Speaker. CPR decided at the time that they were going to change the locomotive to diesel. They made those decisions on a conscious basis.

So what do we learn through all of this? Well we learned that it was tragic that Canadians decided not to use the transportation system. That is a tragic consequence, obviously, of different modes of transportation. It is tragic that the law of economics cannot be denied. Then the Member simplistically says, I am in favour—the simplistic Liberal approach, I am in favour. I wish the law of economics could be defied so that I could be held in higher esteem by Members of my Treasury Bench, so I did not have to say no so often when they would come forward in legitimate needs of their areas of responsibility. Unfortunately the law of economics cannot be defied. It is unfortunate that Canadians have chosen to choose other modes of transportation.

The Liberals would tell all, and they will run from here, and they will tell all that they have a better way, that they could keep VIA going. Mr. Speaker, we know they do not have a better way, because indeed as Members of the Government have chronicled here over

the last two hours, they were the Liberals that were primarily responsible for the disbanding of VIA Rail as we know it.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I wish that VIA could continue, and I wish that my station agent would still be there so that my children could go and talk to him and learn something about railroading directly. But all of us are responsible for the fact that station agent is not there, and all of us in this Chamber are responsible for the fact that VIA is changing today and that there are cutbacks being imposed upon it. Each and every one of us does not have to look any further than the mirror if we want to look at the real culprits. But what I find is almost as tragic is the sanctimonious nature of the Opposition with respect to a Speaker's Ruling as to what is urgent and what is not.

Mr. Acting Speaker, last week I was the target; I had flaunted the Rules of this Legislature. The Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs), particularly, and Members of her Party recounted the history of King Richard, of King John, of Queen Elizabeth I, and took us back to all of our British history to understand the history of parliamentary democracy as we know it, all of it, because I had flaunted the Rules. But who, in the view of the Leader of the Opposition, flaunted the Rules of the House this week? Well, who flaunted the Rules in the eyes of the Leader of Opposition today? The Speaker, the Speaker flaunted the Rules today because he ruled rightly that what the Member has proposed as an urgent matter that required urgent debate was out of order, and the Leader of the Liberal Party, the Opposition, said, no, you are wrong and with respect, we challenge your ruling.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I am horrified by that. Today the Liberals decided that they were going to censure the Speaker of the House in their own way. His ruling was correct and it should not be challenged, and to the Members opposite I say, shame. What a mockery of their pious parliamentary position of last week. There is just no other word of it. What a pious mockery of every thing you had to say last week. It is bad enough when you challenge a Member, that is your legitimate role, but when you challenge the Speaker and call him, in essence, out of order, I say to you, you are a desperate Party and that the politics and the sensationalism that you can draw out of any issue is your only purpose for being here.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I may not have time to put all this on the record. I hope I have a minute or two minutes and, if I do not, the Government House Leader (Mr. McCrae) will. But in the First Session the Speaker's Ruling was challenged seven times and most of the time the Opposition Party, the Liberal Party, saw reason to support the Chair. I cannot go through all the list of reasons, but what became obvious then was the fact that there was no politics in that; there was no sensationalism. So, all of a sudden, they decided that maybe they should listen to the New Democratic Party because there was more politics involved in that. They should listen to the MLA for Churchill (Mr. Cowan). What has happened in this Session? Eight times the Speaker's Ruling has been challenged and on four of those occasions, the Liberal Opposition has chosen to

burn the Speaker on issues such as May 19, federal budget and the devastating effect on Manitoba families and communities; such as, on September 18, the effect of the goods and services tax on Manitoba; such as on October 16, the voluntary work stoppage to be held October 17, 1989 and its impact on child care professionals; and today, January 15, VIA Rail.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I say to you, that is a shameful record and one that, as the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) has said, speaks totally in opposition to all the comments made by the Leader of the Liberal Party when she was in Opposition, when she was the Leader of the third Party, when she said she was going to bring a new order, a new decorum to this House, a new approach to how this Parliament should conduct itself. Mr. Acting Speaker, I say she mocks every word she ever made with respect to that. It is a shameful day, and this debate has done nothing in support of those people who really believe that VIA should continue which includes the Government of Manitoba, but beyond that the workers who have worked for VIA for so many years.

* (1700)

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): Mr. Acting Speaker, in life it is often that several events will overlap each other. I think today when we look at the American friends of ours celebrating the anniversary and birthday of Martin Luther King who celebrated a national dream in his country, we in this country are celebrating the death in a very bereaved way of a national dream that we have had for Canada. The Minister of Justice is celebrating a death. I think you can in positive ways hope for a future through this, this action that is taken today.

We have a dream. We have had a dream, this country. It has been a national dream. Our country has been founded on this dream. I hope today, as we in this House have put forward as a Liberal Party and supported by the NDP, that all voices across this nation will rise today against the loss of that dream. Our country was put together in a national constitution fabricated through a linkage of train rails from sea to sea and eventually to the other sea. It is a fabric that has kept our country together and we are today mourning its loss, and the fact that no longer will we easily be able to cover our country as we have in the past.

Is this decision, has this decision been based on purely economics as the Government wishes to put forward? Is this truly the reason why VIA Rail has been cut? Have we seen any options put forward by the federal Government to improve services? Have we seen them choose in any way to support the call for use it or lose it?

Mr. Acting Speaker, I myself coming from southern Ontario know the heritage of our national dream, know railways, just as every person in Canada has a story to tell. I think it is interesting over the last few days how everyone will come up to you and tell you of their experiences of railways in their lifetime. Indeed, the world does change, but the railway future should change

with it. Other countries, as has been pointed out today in this House, have seen the change that countries can make in their railway systems, but Canada did not want to change, they did not want to dream a new national dream. The federal Conservative Government buries our dreams in constitutional, in economic ways and now in our railway link. Our national dream is being torn apart under this federal Conservative Government and this is just but one example and we mourn its loss.

If we were to choose the best, environmentally, method of transporting goods or people, we would probably have to choose railways, and per miles used that is more environmentally friendly to use a railway than any other means of transportation. Indeed in this fast world that we have today the options are often for time saving. Therefore, the trains in some areas have been less than used. We have not seen a promotion to put them on time and use them for tourist industry. We have not seen them use the millions of dollars that tourist industry brings into our province and our country through the usage of our trains. That is not talked of in this day of economic restraints. They are just cutting back with an unwielding knife on our national dream.

Mr. Acting Speaker, many of the cuts that are made just do not make economical sense. I speak of tales coming from my parents in Ontario, where we live on the railway line from Toronto to Montreal. The railway train used to leave at 6:30 or 7:30 in the morning, early in the morning, every day to go to Toronto, and it was always full, for people could ride down in the day and return that evening. Now, in the wisdom of this federal Government, they have cut back the early train and only have one going in the afternoon. So of course it will not be used, and the federal Government can prove to itself what it set out to prove and not support what we need in this country, and that is safe, efficient transportation. They are just wielding their axe against our national dream and cutting the fabric of Canada apart piece by piece.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this Government does not wish to discuss the actions of its federal cousins. It does not wish to mourn the loss of this national dream. It does not speak of our symbolic heritage that is being lost as of today. It does not speak of the economics of this loss, of the people's lives that will be affected by this loss. It wishes to speak only of the political repercussions that will take place.

You would think that this Government has never in Opposition tried to overturn the ruling of a Speaker. Indeed, I understand even during budget or throne debates they would try to overturn rulings of a Speaker and at times, I understand, harass the sole Member of the Liberal Party because she was unwilling to mock the rules of the House unnecessarily in the terms of this unfeeling Government that we have today. Mr. Acting Speaker, we seem to always see from this Government two sets of rules, what they would do if they were a majority and what they have to do when they are a minority.

This provincial Government does not seem to want to understand what the Rules of this House are about, what the rules of Parliament are about, and what we

are here charged to do. We are here as voices of the people, and today all we have left is our voice against the cuts in VIA Rail. We have used every method possible trying to delay these cuts, indeed trying to take these cuts away from the evidence that we see today. We have used every voice we have, but we have one voice left. We chose today, in the Liberal Party, to put that voice forward, and we are disappointed that the provincial Government will not see fit to join us in that voice.

I believe that the voices we represent have to be heard today, and that they are being heard by this decision to have this most important matter discussed. We have only our voices left, Mr. Acting Speaker. We cannot change the Government's actions. They are taking place as we speak. The last trains have drawn in, the last dream is drawing close, and this Government wishes only to discuss politics. If we have a dream, we would voice those dreams. If we have a belief, we stand behind those beliefs, and we do not mock the system by calling it political. We have one voice, and I wish across this country that this voice will be heard today. We have one voice in this Legislature, but this Government does not wish to put it forward. It is a shame, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I hope this Government will realize that the voices of the people have not been heard by them today, that this is the time, this is the day, that our voice could have had an effect and they chose to belittle it. We have a dream. Let us hope our voices will be heard to fulfill that dream.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I too would like to join in this very important debate on a national tragedy that is now occurring in this country, namely the demise of a national rail transportation system.

I heard Members of the Opposition, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), in this debate and I really get the feeling they may regret the loss of VIA, the diminution of VIA services. But I do not really believe—my impression is they really do not care about it. I respect the Minister of Finance. I think he is a very honest, straightforward person, and he really virtually came close to saying, in fact I think he did imply, that he really did not oppose this because it was a way for the federal Government to save money. It probably would reduce the deficit, the federal deficit.

* (1710)

I think what we have therefore is a Government, in spite of the efforts made by the Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger)—I want to take nothing away from him—but I really get the feeling that we can do more. This Government could do more than it has, and should even be more enthusiastic than it has shown today in speaking up against this national tragedy that is now occurring. The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) said, well, what is to be gained, it is a fait accompli. Mr. Acting Speaker, we have to join with other Manitobans, with other Canadians and voice our concerns and get the message to Ottawa. Even though Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Bouchard will not listen, I still believe there is something to be gained in joining in sending this message, in rallying public opinion on this

very important issue. Ultimately in the long run it will have some value.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I therefore express my disappointment in some Members of the opposite side, on the Government side, who are very lukewarm in this. I almost get the feeling that they are going through the motions and not providing the effective opposition we need to the federal Government mood in this regard.

I am reminded of back in the '70's when I had some responsibility for transport policy in this Government, as Minister of Industry and Commerce at that time. We had the transportation policy branch in the department, and we, I believe, had a very effective liaison with the other western provinces, namely British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. This came out of the Western Economic Opportunities Conference that was sponsored by the federal Government in Ottawa by Mr. Trudeau. One of the most important agreements that came out of that meeting in Calgary was to set up in a formal way a mechanism whereby the four western Ministers concerned with transport policy would meet on a regular basis and as required with the federal Minister of Transport. At that time it was Mr. Jean Marchand, whom I have a lot of respect for. He has passed away, but I respected Mr. Jean Marchand. I think he was an excellent Minister and he really cared, in my judgement, about western economic needs and western transportation needs. We did a lot of good things together.

The federal Minister and the four western provinces, we did not have the opposition, we did not have the headbashing. We, I believe, approached it in a co-operative fashion. We had some major concerns at that time. It was not national rail passenger service. We were concerned at that point about branch line utilization. We were concerned about port development. We were concerned about developing the Port of Churchill; British Columbia was concerned about developing Prince Rupert.

In fact we did indeed accomplish something. I might just use an example in terms of the Port of Churchill. Not only did we get Mr. Marchand to get monies to improve the port itself, the dock, and so forth, but we also obtained agreement from Mr. Marchand and the federal Government to set up a tug-and-barge operation so that we could reinstitute the supply of the outports in Hudson Bay out of Churchill instead out of Montreal.

Up to that point, a supply ship would come from Montreal, come into Hudson Bay, and would supply goods and services—goods, materials, food, whatever—to the various outports in Hudson Bay. We were successful—when I say we, Manitoba supported by the other western provinces—in persuading the federal Government, Mr. Marchand, that we should set up a different approach and indeed this came about. We had what was called a tug-and-barge operation which is a very effective way of doing it. The goods were therefore supplied in future out of Winnipeg up to Churchill and the activity took place there. So I felt that this was a very effective way of doing it.

I do not know why we do not have a more effective approach today on this particular issue, with Manitoba

working with the three other provinces. I might point out, Mr. Acting Speaker, that we had various kinds of political Parties. We had Social Credit in British Columbia, Conservative—the Premier of Alberta at that time, Mr. Lougheed, we had a Conservative Government in Alberta. I believe at that time we had an NDP Government in Saskatchewan and, of course, in Manitoba and, of course, the federal Minister was a Liberal. There was a genuine concern and in a co-operative way we got a lot of good things done.

Obviously, the problem that we are facing relates to technological change that has caused increased competition by other modes of transport. In years gone back, the only way you could get from point A to point B over land effectively was by rail. The only way—short of the Red River ox cart, but that was rather inefficient and it was sort of noisy and sort of squeaked along.

If you look at the map of the Prairies, in particular, and see where the major towns are located, why is Neepawa where it is, for example? Why is Portage where it is? Why indeed is the City of Brandon where it specifically is? It was because of decisions made by the CPR and later by other railways: Canadian Northern, National Transcontinental. Later these became the CNR, but they had a great bearing on where the towns were to be located, divisional points and other points of service for the railways.

I know the people across the way do not seem to be too enthused about this. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) do not seem to be that concerned about this issue. They seem to pooh-pooh the idea of this being an economical proposition and so on.

But the fact is that economists who have studied this have made the case—with new equipment, new approaches, and allowing the railway to play an effective role. The most effective role from what I have read on this is that the railways can be very competitive in the intermediate range. The very short range you have—excuse me, Mr. Acting Speaker, how many minutes do I have? Two minutes, my God. I am only 5 percent of the way through my remarks.

The railways can play a very effective intermediate role, and the short run up to 200 miles or so, buses are very competitive. Certainly when you get beyond 500, 600, 700 miles the airlines are very effective, but in the intermediate stage, there is a very important role for railways to play. There has been talk about these intermediate runs coupled with the long run, transcontinental tourist runs.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I guess what it is all about, I will just come right to it, because I do not have enough time. It comes to a matter of vision of nation building. You know today we have got a Mr. Mulroney, a neo-Conservative, who is, in my view, totally on the other side of the field from the national Conservatives, John A. Macdonald. People at the beginning of this country's history who had a vision of nation building and were prepared to do things, even though they did not pay money, did not pay their way in the short run. I say it is time to get this national unity vision. There is money to be had; peace is breaking out around the world; it

is time to look at saving money on defence spending. There are other areas. We are spending money on energy projects which are questionable. There are other ways and other areas of getting money to support a national transportation system, a national passenger transportation system. I agree with those speakers who said that this is just one more step in weakening the national fabric, along with Meech Lake, free trade and a threat to the social security health care system that we have.

So, Mr Speaker, I am proud to join with those who oppose what the Mulroney Government is trying to do. It is a sad day for Canada. The solution, of course, is to defeat the Tory Government in Ottawa, and I am confident that is going to happen in the next election. Thank you.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Acting Speaker, it does not give me much pleasure to enter into this debate today. I think today is a very sad day for two reasons. It is a sad day for Manitobans and Canadians because of the cuts that have taken place with VIA Rail, and the other sad reason is that I think what we are doing here today is really a fruitless effort. I think the disease with VIA Rail started at its inception many years ago, and many Members have indicated it was doomed to failure from the start. In my perception, looking at the history of it, it has always been going in that direction, but today is the funeral of it. It is like the hockey game was over and the players have a fight after the game. Basically, that is what I think, to some degree, we are doing here today.

The decision has been made and I think there has never been a more extensive lobby taking place in this country, across the whole of Canada, in terms of trying to lobby for the retention of the VIA Rail and avoiding the cutbacks.

Mr. Acting Speaker, as Minister of Highways and Transportation, I have consistently, along with previous Ministers, because nothing has changed in my transportation division in terms of the people who are there or the policy that we have promoted all the time in terms of our position regarding VIA Rail. We have continually promoted the idea of the retention of VIA Rail passenger service to remote and isolated communities, the retention and improvement of VIA Rail passenger service and maintenance facilities, the protection of VIA Rail employees, and the provision of new equipment. If any of the Members want to take the time to go through the whole history of what has happened, it seemed imperative that ultimately VIA Rail would not be successful.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this is the day. This is when the cuts are finally taking effect and the saddest thing is for the people who are basically affected by jobs. The economy on the province is traumatic—you know, all the provinces across Canada. I indicated that possibly there is a little bit of politics being played with this debate here today because the decision has been final. If this debate was so important today, and I am treating possibly on thin ground when I indicate it, but an hour after the debate started we had a total of five combined

Opposition Members in this House. Mr. Acting Speaker, I will now withdraw that, but it just illustrates how important this debate has been to the Members of the Opposition.

It is with that, because I think politics are being played with a very serious issue. It is affecting many people's lives dramatically. Mr. Acting Speaker, I have been accused of having a paper campaign with the federal Minister and the federal Government about our position with VIA Rail, and I would like to take this opportunity to maybe just indicate some of the other things that have happened.

* (1720)

Mr. Acting Speaker, on September 20 and 21, aside from all the paper, memorandums and communication that I had with the federal Government, the provincial Ministers met in Calgary, and VIA Rail was one of the top items of discussion. We unanimously, all provincial Ministers, passed a communique indicating a moratorium on decisions on VIA Rail. This was unanimous discussion, unanimous support. This was presented in person to the federal Minister the next day, who rejected it, regretfully, most unfortunately, but rejected it.

I have to indicate that there was more than just a paper campaign involved over a period of time. Subject to that, Mr. Acting Speaker, I made arrangements. We tried to combine the provincial Ministers again after the decision came down, tried to rally the Ministers across Canada to go forward again. I made an appointment with the federal Minister of Transportation, Benoit Bouchard.

In the meantime, I met with the labour people, with the Winnipeg Chamber, the City of Winnipeg. We developed a joint position that we were going to bring forward to the National Transportation Committee that was meeting to look at the pros and cons of VIA Rail. In conjunction with that meeting, at the same time, we met with the federal Minister. I was criticized by the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) that we did not take Members of the Opposition along. I made them privy to the communique that we had asked for their support, and we specifically stressed that statement in our presentation there, that this was the position of this Government and Members of the Opposition as well. So we laid that before them.

What we did also, Mr. Acting Speaker, when we met the federal Minister Bouchard, we indicated the retention of the northern route, service to remote communities, we stressed that very strongly to him. He agreed that for five years we would have access to the remote communities.— (interjection)— You never have. The Member says never ten. They had a year-to-year kind of situation. Nothing has basically changed. If we want to play a little bit of politics, that is fine, but basically I have the same problems that they had, and nothing would change regardless of which Government was here because we laid our case forward many, many times.

The one thing that we did, just to give you an illustration—I believe the federal Minister was not

properly informed as to what was happening. When I raised the camper rail issue, which services 200 cottage owners in Ontario, he indicated, well then they should go by road or by bus, not realizing the fact that there is no way that there is any road close by. That time, he also gave an indication that he would review it, based on that information. The decision that has come down, not directly because I have not had direct communication back from him on that issue, I am very unhappy with that.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am not standing here defending what VIA Rail has done. I am not here defending what the federal Minister of Transportation has done with VIA. I have been critical from Day One of it, and will continue to be so.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the next day, we made a joint presentation in front of the National Transportation Committee. The points that we raised in a joint communique, and that was with labour, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the City of Winnipeg, and the Province of Manitoba. We raised many issues with them. We had, I think, a very good hearing with them. In fact, we got a compliment sent to us by the Chairman after it was over. In their presentation to the federal Minister, they used many of our recommendations, which were again turned down.

So if the Members opposite here indicate that there has not been a very active, aggressive lobby taking place, further to that, the First Ministers met and also had a communique indicating that there should be a moratorium on VIA Rail cuts until a further study had been done. That also fell on deaf ears. I think that it does not really matter how we debate today after the extensive lobby. This is the lobby that took place from Manitoba. Each province has done their own lobby to the point where B.C. took it to court. Everything has failed. The federal Government has turned a deaf ear to these pleas and to the presentations that have come forward.

They made a decision, and I have to agree with the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) when he indicated—no, it was not the Leader. One of the Members who spoke indicated that he doubted whether there was the economic benefit by these cutbacks in terms of even VIA itself to show a better picture. We talk of a \$641 million subsidy last year and they say that after these cuts it will be down to \$350 million. I have my doubts as to those figures, because the impact on Manitoba alone—and the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) has indicated I have not answered the question.

When the question was raised with the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond) to some degree, she indicated that it is very hard to be definitive in terms of how many employees will be specifically affected because of the system within the union in terms of seniority in there, so we cannot be definitive in terms of specifically what the economic impact will be.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) has the information that both Parties have in terms of the brief that we presented to the federal Government and for the National Transportation Committee, in terms of

what we feel—and we used rough figures—of what we felt to the best ability that we could judge would be the impact. Based on the fact that the federal plan called for approximately 224 VIA employees in Manitoba, I think 151 will have been laid off as of today, and even that we cannot and the union cannot be specific about because of the way the system works. We anticipate possibly further layoffs are pending. We could lose up to 30 million annually in wages. We anticipate \$15 to \$20 million in the purchase of goods and services, because a lot of services were provided here for VIA Rail out of Winnipeg.

We could also lose in addition \$10 million in taxes. The figure that we used was \$55 to \$60 million annually would be the impact on Manitoba. If you consider that impact and all the rest of the provinces in various stages, really in my view it is a transfer of responsibility, and the losses, on the provinces. So VIA might be showing, under the circumstances, a little bit of a better picture. I am concerned that if we are going to look to reduce the total deficit that we have been paying for VIA Rail, that ultimately very few services will be left.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I realize that 10 minutes is a very short time to deal with things I would like to deal with in depth, but I just wanted to indicate the things that have happened. I feel that what we are doing here today is basically not going to accomplish anything.

Mr. Herold Driedger (Niakwa): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am pleased to be able to rise at this time to enter this debate, particularly after the comments made by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger). I think that this is the level at which the debate should have been engendered, the debate should have been carried on, because what we have here affecting Manitoba today, affecting Canada today, is a matter of agenda.

It is not necessarily a political agenda in this Chamber, because I do know that previous speakers talked about what the Opposition was doing versus what the Government was doing. That is not at the level of which this debate should be taking place. Rather, the agenda that we should be looking at is the agenda of a conflict in national vision, the conflict between the agenda of a central Canada and a head office mentality that is embodied in the CPR and the CNR railroads versus the rest of the country.

The rest of the country is not defined as the populous parts, because I think if you take a look across the country you will find that there are pockets of growth and pockets of activity. But many parts of this country are very unequally distributed. There is regional disparity. There is regional disparity in economic activity, there is regional disparity in the kind of infrastructure that we have provided for us. There is regional disparity in the kind of natural resources that are given to the population to utilize, and there is regional disparity in the kind of sharing of resources that we would like to see in a country that has a unified view of where it should be going, of where it would like every single person, every single labourer, every single citizen to be able to enjoy their quality of life.

* (1730)

I have referenced in speeches in this House on previous occasions, mind you not with the term head office mentality, but actually giving some examples where how some corporate leaders, chief executive officers can make decisions that are nothing to do with the quality of life of the people that they actually directly affect but rather have nothing to do with, but have everything to do with the bottom line. The bottom line of a balance sheet, herein we have the issue of VIA Rail.

I think it is, I believe one of the previous speakers used the term crass political arrogance with respect to how this debate was begun. I would like to use the same terminology, crass political arrogance, to talk about the railroads themselves. Here we have two major multinational corporations that have grown fat, that have waxed fat off the taxpayers of this country. When the national vision of creating a railroad was first talked about and then attempted to be developed, much taxpayer support went into the encouragement for the developers to carry on with the political agenda of the policymakers. In the interim from the time that they began with all the rules that they agreed to, to the kind of agreements that they entered into, for case in point, I believe for the CP Rail they were supposed to maintain in perpetuity a stockyard for cattle in St. Boniface. When you take a look at what they actually have provided in order to be able to fulfill this requirement, you see something that is a joke. They just simply used the literal fact that here is a yard and I would like to use if I may use the term yardlet to indicate a very, very small yard, essentially just a few square feet to fulfill the letter of the law. In this way they got around the requirement that they had to provide a service.

In the same token, the provision of a passenger service which was incumbent within the entire railroad structure and what we thought was there in perpetuity signed away, because, I think if I come back to the comment I made at the very beginning, this whole issue is a problem of agenda. I know that speakers opposite and even speakers to my left have spoken about the fact that different Ministers of Transportation federally whether Conservative or Liberal have signed the documents which led to the dismantling of VIA which led to the creation of VIA which led to wherever we are at the stage right now. In that respect I absolutely cannot fault their logic, that happened. This is a problem of central Canada versus the rest of the country.

We have the situation where the individual signing is done because somebody has convinced a temporary custodian of the decision-making Chair, the Minister of Finance by somebody just perhaps a little bit more permanent but still temporary, the Deputy Minister or parts of the department indicating that if we follow this particular agenda, we will accommodate, we will achieve our needs.

Facing them and advising them are directors, chief executive officers of the corporations, of CPR, of CNR, people who have been here for years and years and who have a vision of where their company is to go. Remember, they are charged with making their company grow and to show a profit. So how do they couch their advice to Government in ways that will encourage the

bottom line, the balance line to show up better, more in the black, more profit for their shareholders, and so on? In this respect they like to funnel off to the taxpayer more and more responsibility. They would like to get rid of every single loss-making factor, every single loss-making agreement that they went into in the original terms of reference which created their railroads.

Let us face it, we are not just talking about railroads here. We are talking airlines, trucking companies, multinational corporations that are completely and totally integrated. The thing they do not want is what they conceive to be a backward, useless business of trucking—I use the wrong terminology—the business of carrying in some manner, shape or form, passengers from one point to another in this country. This is shortsightedness of the first magnitude. The national vision is one that should see to it that the infrastructure of the country is dedicated to the people first, not to goods.

It is people that matter, not the goods. We need the goods so that people can make a living by utilizing to create the economy, but the bottom line should still be people first. That is what we should keep uppermost in our mind when we enter into debates like this, when we talk in this Chamber.

Just to indicate that this is simply a money-making scheme by the people who are supposed to be delivering the service—actually, when you take a look at the amount of dollars that were spent in indirect subsidies to the railroads so they could grow fatter, bigger and stronger while they were carrying what they termed the VIA albatross on their tracks, every single high cost of trackage fees, of the transfer of outdated equipment, the fact that if you had to do a repair, it had to be repaired in their shops, at their rates, at their costs. VIA could not even contract out to get a cheaper rate. All this money was funneled into the ability of the corporations, the CNs, the CPs to utilize those dollars to fulfill their directors' agendas and their shareholders' agendas.

Here we have a situation where they are now saying, we have had it, we have taken as much money as we need, now let us get rid of this because we can now do it leaner and meaner and faster and better doing it differently. The taxpayer is going to take it in the neck again because these costs that had been put into passenger networking will now, as the railroads take a look a little bit more at some of the more unprofitable lines, be transferred onto the backs of the taxpayer for road building. These will be transferred onto the backs of the taxpayer now for upgrading airport facilities because now people, by virtue of being told they cannot utilize the railroads, are going to have to use a different method. This is going to cause changes in the way they utilize the transportation system.

Mr. Acting Speaker, thank you very much for this time to address the Chamber. My time has expired.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Acting Speaker, there are a couple of issues that I want to address in my remarks on this particular resolution. First of all, the Government has expressed its concern and in fact ridiculed some of us who believed it was important to

debate this particular issue, and I want to say that there is more than a little bit of hypocrisy involved in the protestations that we have heard to date.

Some of us had the good fortune to be in this Chamber for a number of years, and I certainly recall on numerous occasions, the Opposition voting to overturn the Speaker. By virtue of the fact that they did not have the numbers, obviously the Speaker's Rulings were seldom overturned. However, the Opposition had their ways, they expressed their view in terms of a given ruling and that is also a right of this Chamber. The Speaker of this Legislature, whom all respect immensely, makes a judgement call and the Chamber has the right to be the final arbiter in terms of questions like, should debate continue.

I agree with others in this Chamber who have said that we as representatives are expected to speak on these kinds of issues. This is not just a federal issue. The federal Government may have the right, the obligation, responsibility of making the final decision, but this decision affects all of us. To the extent that this provincial Government, this Legislature, has any clout whatsoever, either in direct terms or in terms of changing the attitude, the thinking of the federal Government, then I believe that on an issue that is this important we have an obligation to speak.

* (1740)

I do not believe it is the right of the Government to belittle those who believe that this is an important issue and who want to speak on an issue such as this. This Government has been a party to other emergency debate resolutions, which they initially opposed and subsequently joined in support of the position that was being taken by other Opposition Parties. I recognize that they are frustrated, that perhaps they are not in a position to initiate these kinds of debates or they did not take responsibility for initiating this kind of debate, but I find it a little strange that they would deny Members of the Legislature the right to enter this kind of debate.

This impacts all of us. It impacts myself, as an MLA for Flin Flon, it impacts MLAs from the City of Winnipeg and other parts of Manitoba. We are losing a part of a national transportation system, a national passenger transportation system, and we are losing it for very weak reasons. We are losing it because of a world view that is shared by Members opposite, Members of the Government, which is not shared by Members of the New Democratic Party and that world view, and it is shared—that world view is also shared by the Liberals, because I remind the Chamber that the deregulation of the transportation system began with Lloyd Axworthy, it began with the Liberal Government in the early '80's, and what we are seeing is the progressive deregulation of the transportation industry.

It follows on the world view that only the free market should be allowed to determine the fares that are charged for transportation and the modes of transportation that exist. That was the thinking that we debated and I debated with Mr. Axworthy and some of his federal colleagues at a time when they began the deregulation of the air industry, the trucking industry

and the rail industry. It goes back to the elimination of the Crow benefit. It goes back to a whole series of debates which revolved around the nature of the transportation networks that we use.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we believe and we know that the transportation systems of every country in the world, regardless of what they are, are subsidized. Did you know that the 6.5 million passengers that travel on VIA trains represent only about 3 percent of the total passengers transported in the country—3 percent. That sounds like a very low percentage, and you say, well, maybe we cannot afford to subsidize a system that transports only 3 percent of the total passengers transported in the country. What we fail to recognize is that the largest single method of transportation is the car, the automobile, which transports about 86 percent of all passengers.

I do not hear Members of the Government, Members of the Liberal Party, Members of the federal Parties suggesting that we should eliminate subsidies to airports because they represent only 7 percent of the passenger transportation in the country. We all know in this Chamber that air transportation is subsidized heavily by the federal Government. We all know that the Seaway, although there are virtually no passengers transported, is another mode of transportation that is supported by the federal Government.

Mr. Acting Speaker, transportation systems are subsidized by governments in every nation of the world. The rail transportation system in Japan, which is, if not the best, among the best in the world, is heavily supported, and they have a population of 120 million people in a land mass the size of the Province of Ontario, even smaller.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the rationale that is being used to phase out our VIA passenger transportation system is faulty. The rationale is faulty to its core, and it represents thinking that has existed in this country for the last decade. It represents thinking that says that the modes of transportation should be determined by the free market system, and governments should not have a role to play. It is shortsighted, naive, ideologically-based thinking which has no place in a country such as Canada. If that kind of thinking had been the order of the day in 1867 when our nation was formed, we would not have had a national transportation system, and in fact we would not have been a nation because the western part of our country would not have been part of Canada. It would have been part of the United States.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to say at the beginning that this is an important debate. It is a debate that is germane to our responsibilities as legislators, and it belongs in this Legislature. For Members of the Government to belittle those who want to debate, to attack those who said this debate should proceed, is rather incongruous when you look at their past actions, and when you understand the importance of this debate.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we are having this debate in part because this Government and this Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) are reluctant to act expeditiously when issues arise.

This Government has a habit, whether it is with the GST or with VIA Rail cuts or CN cuts or Rafferty-Alameda, which is an issue on which it has changed its mind at least four times in the last 20 months. They have a habit of supporting their federal brothers and sisters all the way down the line until they realize the people in the Province of Manitoba do not support it. Then they say, oh yes, we are against that too, by the way; I just wanted to raise that; yes, we are very much opposed to that, darn.

Instead of taking up a grass-roots fight against those kinds of measures in the first instance, instead of taking the gloves off when they should take the gloves off when they recognize that some principle is being breached by their federal brothers and sisters, they wait until it is too late and then join in some pathetic attempt to gain public support. This is another example. There are many, many people on the Conservative front benches, Mr. Acting Speaker, who do not believe that this kind of protest has any place in the Legislature. There are many who do not believe in the vision that we have for VIA. There are many who would say along with their federal cousins that, yes, we should let the marketplace decide what kinds of modes of transportation serve this country.

There are those among the Conservative Caucus and perhaps the Liberals who believe the free marketplace should determine the fares and what areas of the country are serviced. Well, we do not happen to be among those. The passenger transportation system that we had in place served us well, and we believe it should continue to serve us and that is why we are speaking today, Mr. Acting Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Jack Penner (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise today not at the pleasure of entering the debate here, but I rise because I am concerned at the arrogance that the Opposition has displayed not only on this issue but on many other issues. The Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) has indicated clearly to the people of Manitoba that she likes to take a dictatorial approach in burning the Speaker time and time again, indicating clearly that she has no respect at all for the Rules of the House or the conduct of this Legislature.

I believe, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the questions we are being asked out in Manitoba, as we meet more and more often with people that are asking the question: what is the Opposition up to; have they any clear direction; do they know where they are heading? Our answer is simply, no, we do not believe they are, as the federal Liberal Party was when the birth of VIA Rail was considered. I think the birth of VIA Rail was a difficult birth and it gave birth to a child that was in jeopardy from the day of its birth. VIA has been plagued from its inception without a clear-cut mandate or direction. VIA has been forced to operate with an inadequate budget and inefficient, antiquated equipment. It has been a performance that was virtually forecast from Day One.

* (1750)

The demise of VIA has been talked about for years simple because Pierre Elliott Trudeau, in his wisdom

just the year before a federal election, asked his then Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Otto Lang, to initiate transportation services for the people of Canada. What did they use? VIA started with a president and a CEO. No legislative mandate, no clear direction, as a matter of fact no direction at all, no employee, no track, no equipment, no station and no maintenance facility.

To begin, VIA had to purchase its equipment from CN and CP Rail for approximately \$70 million, \$70 million for a bunch of scrap, for equipment that was 20 years old, that cost them money from Day One. And who were the Party that were in power in Ottawa at that time? I ask you, Mr. Acting Speaker, who were they? They were the Liberal Party, the same Party that is time and time again in this Legislature burning the Speaker, telling the Speaker that he really does not know what he is doing. Well, I propose to you that it is the Liberal Opposition, in co-operation with the NDP Opposition, that does not know what it is doing.

I would make the argument that we are here for the same reason today, debating a federal issue that the provincial Legislature has really no jurisdiction on. We are here debating this issue for the same reason the two Opposition Parties decided not to enter into debate on the assessment for reform legislation for a whole month. I would propose to you that we could have debated the assessment reform legislation starting on November 8, when it was introduced in this House for second reading.

Did the two Opposition Parties choose to debate it? No. It was stood in this Legislature for almost a month, a month that the people of Manitoba could have used and would have appreciated to have input into this Bill. The two Opposition Parties combined refused to allow the people of Manitoba to debate the Bill, and therefore we were rushed into the public debate on the Bill, not because we did not put the legislation forward soon enough, not because we stalled the legislation, but because the Opposition Parties of this Legislature did not want to see good solid legislation brought forward. It was demonstrated clearly at committee time after time, presenter after presenter, municipality after municipality, and organization after organization, that we had been waiting for years for this type of legislation, and we are not able to pass it.

It is also clear that the two Opposition Parties combined wanted to make sure they would cause some difficulty for the various departments of this Government that had to put forward the calculations on assessment and provide to municipalities and school divisions those numbers. They indicated clearly that they wanted to cause that delay and extra expenditures. But of course money does not mean anything to the Opposition Parties, does it? Absolutely nothing. If we would have followed the direction of the Liberal Party, we would have spent some \$750 million this year alone in programs they would have initiated, that is clear, paying no attention of where the money could come from, none at all.

It is the same kind of responsible programming that was put in place for VIA Rail. The federal Government has spent half a billion dollars repairing old equipment

and keeping it going. For what, when in the first place the federal Liberal Party could have made a clear decision to buy new equipment? If they had spent the half billion dollars on new equipment at that time, we would have had something. We would have probably had a railway that could have stood the test of time.

Instead, we have for the past 12 years seen the gradual decline and deterioration of the equipment and also the services that have been provided to people of Canada. It is a sad tale, is it not, but we in this Legislature here today are asked to pass judgment on the federal decision to cut VIA Rail Services. We are all opposed, as we have indicated clearly many times, to the decision to cut those services to Canadians, especially those in the more remote areas of our province, as well as to the remote areas of Western Canada.

It is important we provide good sound services to our people in Manitoba, and we intend to provide those services, Mr. Acting Speaker, to the people of Manitoba, but we intend to do it in a clearly enunciated program and clearly enunciated way that will stand the test of time, not as the federal Liberal Party did when they created VIA Rail.

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): This is a subject that I addressed to the federal Liberal task force on VIA Rail this summer, and it is not a subject with which I am unfamiliar. My family has probably I think some 132 or 133 person years involved in transportation in this nation, and rail was one of those modes. My grandfather began his career before it was CN over in this station just down the end of Broadway Avenue here. I must say that the thinking that goes with railroads today in nations that have modern systems is not one that goes with the thinking involved in the federal Tory Party, and it would appear in some cases with the provincial Tory Party as well, i.e. no modernization at all.

The previous speaker, the Member for Rhineland, and our Honourable Minister for Rural Development (Mr. Penner) goes on and crows, Mr. Acting Speaker, about how things were done about The Municipal Assessment Act. I should maybe have started my speech by saying, threescore and four amendments ago, we started debate on that piece of legislation, because that piece of legislation was abominable and should never have been brought to the House in the form that it was this fall.

I make no apology as an active Member of the Opposition in critiquing that piece of legislation and putting it in somewhat of a form that was acceptable to the public, and I would suggest to the legal community as well, because there were pitfalls all over the place, Mr. Acting Speaker.- (interjection)- 64 amendments, that is right, many of which, 50 of them I believe, the Minister proposed himself based upon initiatives of both the Opposition Parties, including one on the last day which was tabled here in the House of which the Minister was not even going to so much as give credit to the Opposition Party, namely the Liberal Party, for initiating it, and it was a thank you very much, my friend, but I will take credit for the amendments too, notwithstanding it showed fault in my legislation.

There has been some talk in this House this afternoon about arrogance. I for one am going to award a mark of A to the Tories, and that is A for arrogance. Why is it that most of the speeches this afternoon have not addressed the issue of VIA Rail, the demise of a national system and the cutting back of certain essential services? If they were so concerned about that, we would have seen more leadership. We would have seen more action, but it is a NATO Government over there, ladies and gentlemen, no action, talk only. The rhetoric is always there. We see it in the environment, lip service environmentalism is the watchword out of the Government benches.

We saw it this afternoon when the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) did not even know what I was talking about, about a secret deal between Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada. Why? Because they are not keeping their channels of communication open. They are being lied to. They are not taking overt action to cause things to happen.

The sitting on hands that we have seen prevalent on the other benches goes along with the sort of things that we see in Ottawa where Manitoba again and again and again gets shafted quite frankly. Whether we see the Kapyong Barracks about to close, we see Portage base about to close, we see the Port of Churchill used almost not at all, we see the bayline to Churchill with some minimum assurances for a five-year period, we have seen CF-18. You know, it is just one thing after another and now it is VIA Rail. It has happened, and it is not from a lack of warning.

* (1800)

The Prime Minister of this country said, use the passenger rail service or lose it. What did Canadians do? They used it. What is happening? They are losing it. That shows how the federal Tories are as good as their word. They are not, not at all. I find that absolutely disgusting, that we are not going to have a national rail service from today on, and that we are not going to have certain parts of the country where rail service is essential served any longer. I find that really unacceptable.

We have got to look at what is going on, and the fact that the railroads have unfortunately overcharged for the use of the rails, and the cost of the crews, and the cost of the services. We do have to talk about the

age of equipment, whether that was the locomotives which, when the railroads were supplying their own locomotives, of course always were the oldest and slowest of the diesel equipment, not the most modern stuff, because that always went to the freight trains. So even while they were out of rail service, passenger rail was getting it in the ear.

We have to look at the fact that the rail equipment, yes, was dated, and everybody knew new equipment was needed. I have never, for one, walked away from the fact that I felt that the federal Liberals should have ensured that equipment was bought earlier. We have had a Tory Government for over five years now, unfortunately, and when we see them promise three years ago, the then Minister of Transport, Crosbie, saying we will spend hundreds of millions of dollars on new equipment, I think it would have been the right move to do because the savings on the maintenance would be absolutely enormous.

In fact, a recent figure, it was estimated that if you went to re-equipping on a stage basis over the next few years, you would start by saving \$125 million per year in the first year of the program. Why did Crosbie not proceed with that? I do not know. It would appear that there was a lack of intestinal fortitude. This was before the Tories had spent us into near bankruptcy. It has only taken them some four and a half years to get to the state that the federal Liberals took 16 to do.

I do not think that is anything to crow about, in the sense that it took 16 years because there should have been tighter reins on the Government in those years, and I was one that said so. To, in one quarter of the time, create the same amount of debt, that is quite an achievement. Why did not Mr. Crosbie proceed? I think he should be asked that. I think he should be asked that by the benches yonder, but I do not hear anything about that. I do not hear the advocacy on the other side of the electrification of the rail system. I do not hear anything about new technology in coach design being advocated, all things that are going to make for a better quality of service and a cheaper service to provide to the public.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., I am interrupting proceedings and the Chair will reconvene at 8 p.m. The Honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) will have four minutes left.