

Oral Questions

member for Vegreville, and his suggestion that there was some question of a filibuster when Bill C-33 was before the House last session. If there was anything like a filibuster, it was somewhat inspired by one of the minister's new colleagues, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, who at that time was the transportation critic for the opposition. The minister obviously desired to remedy these gaps in transportation policy and they were, as my hon. friend from Vegreville mentioned, defined in the election campaign of four years ago.

● (1432)

Since the minister had the desire to do something, has he yet spoken to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce to find out what his objections were to Bill C-33, so that a bill could come before this House which could receive expeditious treatment?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member, with regard to matters such as that concerning a region of western Canada, that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and I work very closely together toward producing a better result for western Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that on the surface, at least in terms of rhetoric, they may be working together. I asked whether the minister had discussed with him the implications of Bill C-33, to see what changes might help that bill move through the House. Has the minister had an opportunity to discuss with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce his meeting with the three ministers of transportation from western Canada on Tuesday last, when transportation problems, not trade and commerce problems, were discussed?

Does the minister agree with the quotation in a report which says that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce feels that too many people in the west are obsessed with the Hall report? Does the Minister of Transport agree that people in the west are obsessed with the Hall report? Has the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce reported to the Minister of Transport what he has found out about transportation problems in the west, so that something can be done for the west, let alone the rest of the country, as the hon. member for Vegreville said earlier?

Mr. Lang: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have discussed the meeting which was designed essentially to deal with industrial development in the west. Of course, transportation is involved in that issue as in almost every other important issue in the economy of this country. I do not know that I checked the particular quotation to which the hon. member has referred.

It is clear that the Hall commission report is an extremely important document for western Canada and, of course, with

[Mr. Nowlan.]

respect to transportation needs. We are working in very important ways to make sure that in its most important aspects it is implemented promptly. We have in investment right now, \$100 million to repair rail lines throughout the western Canadian territory—this at a time of serious fiscal restraint. The hon. member opposite should recognize the importance of that. We intend to honour this very important document.

IMPLEMENTATION OF HALL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport. In light of the fact that the \$1 million Hall report tabled in May, 1977, resulted in 92 individual recommendations, of which only six have been fully implemented, three have been partially implemented, 58 have not been implemented at all and 24 official statements have been made on the rest, calling for further study, and noting that the western premiers bypassed the Minister of Transport and tried to meet the Prime Minister with a view to persuading the government to implement the recommendations speedily, I ask the minister, when will he implement the action recommendations by Hall, instead of further stalling and impeding the improvement of transportation and grain handling in the west?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, obviously a good number of matters which are recommended in a royal commission report involve very significant expenditures. These have to be weighed. Sometimes engineering designs are required. These have to come before action—as the hon. member calls it—can take place.

In fact, what we did was immediately transfer lines to the basic rail network which Mr. Justice Hall's commission wanted there. We have begun the rehabilitation work, which is the most important, immediate action to take place. We set up an action committee, which has made recommendations on some additional lines. Indeed, we are taking very rapid action on most of the important recommendations, not with the approval, it is true, of the three provincial governments which happen to be in a different partisan field—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, it is true that our form of action has been endorsed almost entirely by the Alberta pool, the Manitoba pool, the Saskatchewan pool and most other key organizations in the west.

An hon. Member: Not the NFU.

Mr. Lang: Not necessarily by the NFU, but by every key organization in agriculture in the west.

Mr. Malone: Mr. Speaker, the minister just said that he has taken no action at all except the abandonment of railways. On August 15, 1977, the minister stated that the total cost involved in implementation of the Hall report must be carefully analysed before a proposal is put before the federal cabinet. Can he tell us today whether those cost analyses have been