

him to the effect that all of this had been reviewed by three groups essentially—the Hall group, the Pratt group and the Neil group. I was telling him that the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw had selected those lines which on the basis of preliminary research offered the best economic chances of continuation. He was not in agreement with me. Would Commissioner Neil answer this question?

• (1220)

**Mr. Neil:** Mr. Speaker, the lines I examined were the ones studied by the Hall Commission and by the Prairie Rail Action Committee and determined not to be viable lines. I examined them based upon the cost of rehabbing and on the basis of what the elevator companies would plan on doing if the lines remained, if they were prepared to upgrade their house or build new facilities. If they indicated that they were prepared to do this and if the cost was within reason, I recommended that the line stay.

I could only say indirectly to the Hon. Minister that those were the bases upon which I conducted my study. As I say, I was the third man down the line, so I was looking at the hard lines. I appreciate that the CTC now has to look at similar types of information, as I did—the costs and what the elevator companies planned on doing with respect to these lines.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to take the floor and participate in the debate today on Bill C-155, an Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof.

From the outset, I would like to consider this Bill as one of the landmarks in the history of Canada.

In tabling this Bill, the Government of Canada is proposing another of those major reforms which have been undertaken by the Liberal Party of Canada through the years. I think it is particularly interesting to note that once again, it is our party, the Liberal Party of Canada, which has had the courage of its convictions in taking action that is controversial, not always easy to understand and upsetting to those who are opposed to change but which is essential to the prosperity and progress of our country. The Opposition parties—the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party—have never had the same vision and courage as the men and women of the Liberal Party of Canada in carrying out these major reforms.

In fact, this is the third major piece of legislation that has come before this Parliament, after the patriation of the Canadian Constitution and our national energy policy which was announced over the last few years and months.

As far as the economy is concerned, there is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that maximizing development of railway transportation in Western Canada is extremely important to the development of our resources and to the economic welfare of the entire country.

### *Western Grain Transportation Act*

As far as the political development of our country is concerned, I may remind the House that it was the Liberal Party of Canada that gave our country a flag, a national anthem and a made-in-Canada Constitution.

In the field of social benefits, once again, the Liberal Party of Canada introduced social security services that benefit all Canadians, including family allowances, old age security, free health and medical care and our pension and retirement plans.

Economically, it was the Liberal Party of Canada which, after the war, created our economic prosperity by supporting the private sector and provided a solid foundation for our trade structure by developing the St. Lawrence Seaway, by entering into agreements with the United States under the Auto Pact and by announcing an energy policy that has finally given Canadians a say in the development of their own resources. Finally, the Government has been able to table in the House its long-awaited plan for providing Western Canada with a transportation system that will meet both present and future needs.

Today, I think we should pay tribute to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) who had the courage to table this Bill and to defend it over the objections and reluctance of some Canadians from all parts of the country who, for purely personal and often petty reasons, are opposed to change and to introducing much-needed reform in Canada. I believe the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party who are opposed to this reform are once again missing an opportunity to make history. Once again, these two political groups have failed to recognize the major benefits that will accrue to us in Canada through this new railway policy and this legislation.

It must be understood that in order to bring not only primary but also, eventually, manufactured products from Western Canada to ports on the Pacific Coast or the Great Lakes, we must provide for a better railway transportation network in Western Canada. It is absolutely vital that this part of Canada should be given the tools it needs to achieve full economic development. I think it is absolutely incredible that the Progressive Conservative and NDP Members from Western Canada should lack this vision and prefer to oppose the Bill for the sake of the short-term interests of a few voters who represent a small minority in Western Canada, and who may be affected by this policy in the short term but will later understand the vision and the sense of history of the Minister of Transport who is at last giving this part of Canada a chance to achieve full development.

I think the present debate shows once again how many conflicting interests there are whenever the Government introduces a policy of any major scope. I am convinced that when the Government of Canada asked Professor Gilson to examine this question, in an attempt to find a compromise that would be acceptable to the parties concerned, we in the Government were right to do so, because we realized that in