

Transportation

ment has been doing, and it has been succeeding to a much greater degree than has ever been the case before.

If I heard my hon. friend correctly, his party would modify the CTC to establish a western arm, as the minister has already announced. My hon. friend was good enough to enlarge on that by saying that he would like a maritimes arm as well. That is a good concept and he will have no argument from the government in that respect. But, again it is policy which has been announced by this government and by the present Minister of Transport.

The opposition are talking about a huge infusion of funds that will be required. As one listened to the hon. member for Lisgar, particularly it appears it will be a very large infusion. I believe fiscal policy was also mentioned. I am not sure if my hon. friend was here, I think he was, but in the last budget a new policy was introduced providing for a faster write-off of railroad equipment. This is designed to encourage railroad rehabilitation and an updating program which this government has already embarked upon.

An hon. Member: Five to ten years too late.

Mr. McIsaac: After nine years of study by the Progressive Conservative commission of years ago, that still has to be their record in transportation. That is all we can compare it to. We have nothing more than that rusty old record of that royal commission dealing with transportation from the last Conservative government of this country. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that Canadians both from the east and the west will be looking at that record of theirs as opposed to the record of this government in the field of transportation in the various areas that have been dealt with.

I had to smile at a point made by my hon. friend. The Conservatives wish to generate an attitude of trust and confidence. That has to be a first. That is the one I could certainly endorse. In my short time here, and elsewhere in public life, I have seen the Conservatives excel at generating an attitude of mistrust across this country, whether it concerns transportation or any other issue. I was pleased to hear my hon. friend from Vegreville say that they wished to generate an attitude of trust and confidence. I am sure he would want to see that happen; he has the opportunity to begin now.

He could have begun sooner to implement and generate trust and confidence from one end of this country to the other. That certainly has not been demonstrated in transportation policy, grain policy, fiscal policy, tax policy or any other subject or field one might examine, if one listened to the remarks made inside and outside of this House over the last couple of months. So that is a very welcome change.

I think it is worth noting for the record the achievements of this government with respect to implementing the Hall commission report. I would remind my hon. friend opposite that it was this government, the Department of Transport and the present minister, when he was minister in charge of the grains group and the Canadian Wheat Board, which established the Hall commission to look at and deal with the whole complex question of improvements in the grain handling system of

[Mr. McIsaac.]

western Canada. That commission did an excellent job throughout western Canada and elsewhere in looking at and assessing the problems and making recommendations. The commission did a great deal to allay the fears and concerns which have been there, and genuinely so, for many years.

What did the government do upon receiving the Hall commission report? Within 11 days—and this has to be something of a record for any government, be it a municipal government, provincial government or otherwise—an order in council had been passed which added 1,813 miles of prairie rail lines. This addition was recommended by the Hall commission to the basic rail network. It increased the total to some 14,000 miles, which was about three-quarters of all prairie rail trackage. In other words, there was no more fear or apprehension about abandonment, of elevators being closed or lines closed, over three-quarters of the prairie network. That was accomplished within 11 days. That certainly has to be the main thrust of that report.

Another 2,344 miles that were suggested should be transferred to the jurisdiction of a prairie rail authority were protected from abandonment until January 1, 1979. Again that portion of the rail lines examined by the Hall commission and sort of left in limbo was set over until such time as it could be assessed, looked at and categorized one way or the other into a permanent network or abandoned.

The question of prairie branch line rehabilitation has been alluded to by both of the hon. members opposite and by the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) as being something which is still a long way off. There is evidence that work has proceeded on a number of rail lines right now in the prairie area and money has been budgeted. The work program is lined up.

Perhaps it might be worth putting on the record of the House of Commons some of the projects that are either under way or scheduled for this particular year. They are: Swan River to Sturgis; Delisle to Beechy; Delisle to Dunblane; Dunblane to Elrose; Glidden to Alsask. I have about four or five pages of these projects covering every part of the three prairie provinces. Vegreville, Alberta, is mentioned; the hon. member referred to problems there. There is another line going out of Vegreville that is scheduled for revamping or new ties. There is another one out of Lloydminster into Alberta which is scheduled for new ties this year. Both the lines from Kerrobert to Rosetown and Lloydminster to Wilkie involve new ties and renovations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member still has three minutes left of his allotted time. I suggest that we do not see the clock for that three minutes. We could allow the hon. member that time and then give the floor to the next speaker and call it six o'clock. Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I have just a few brief comments in conclusion. The NDP spokesman today, along with other representatives of his party, will have to devise a new