

*Transportation Policies*

give the kind of consideration to the transportation needs of this country which he has not given until now.

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, this is the second day of debate on transportation questions. Yesterday's subject was a fairly broad one dealing with transportation problems in Canada, particularly the Atlantic and western regions. Today's subject is even broader since the motion refers to transportation problems in Canada, urban and rural, and I am not sure whether that is meant to leave out anything or whether a portion of central Canada has been left out in the mix between the two motions. The extraordinary thing which anyone listening to the debate must observe, and which I wish had been widely observed, is the lack of real criticism or of substance in the comments we have heard up to this point in relation to broad government policy on transportation. Transportation is such a broad field, there are so many fronts on which we are moving and so many things happening, yet so few of them have been mentioned in the debate here.

We have heard from the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. Hamilton) comments on the history of transportation, which presumably demonstrates the urgency of the problems with which we are dealing. Besides that, he mentioned a number of fronts on which we are moving and, generally speaking, while he did not say so in words, he was endorsing the position taken on the fronts on which we are moving. He and the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), broadly embracing the principles of the Hall Commission report, have certainly picked up where the government policy stands on this. Indeed I wonder if very often action has followed so swiftly on any document or commission report as has been the case with the Hall Commission report.

As hon. members know, almost within ten days of the receipt of the report, action was taken on the first and most important recommendation of the Hall Commission in regard to the transfer of 1813 additional miles of rail to the basic rail network. The following day I met with producer groups and others in Regina to outline to them the ideas which we had and on which we thought we could move forward rapidly in relation to the other recommendations of the Hall Commission report, some of which will take further consideration and deliberation over time.

I should say that the meeting in Regina was certainly a very receptive one in terms of the reactions and attitudes of those who attended. I note, for instance, a report in the *Regina Leader-Post* dated Saturday, May 28, in which Boyd Anderson of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities described the meeting as a positive effort to resolve complex issues. Ted Turner of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool praised fast government action to adopt the main recommendations of the report. He said, "Establishment of a prairie rail action committee . . . is a necessary catalyst". Mr. Gordon Harrold of the Alberta Wheat Pool expressed surprise at how quickly the government had moved to implement the report. Mac Runciman, president of United Grain Growers, was impressed that only ten days after the complex Hall report was tabled, the government was already acting.

[Mr. Orlikow.]

● (1630)

A headline in the *Western Producer* read "Speedy Action on Hall Report Recommendations". A *Free Press* report from Winnipeg carried the headline "Lang Moves Quickly on Hall Proposals". Another story in the *Manitoba Co-operator* is headed "Lang Moves on Hall Report", and there is a sub-heading above it which states "Will Retain Crow Rates". That was dated June 2, 1977.

The Hall report was an important document. It was part of an ongoing series of actions which have been taking place in the prairie area to deal with the grain handling and transportation system, and in those main things we have the support of hon. members opposite. I will come back to some of those details just to put into context the nature of the Hall report. It builds upon what we are doing throughout this country in transportation and upon matters which are under way and which are very fast moving, about which hon. members opposite have little to say.

It is true that the hon. member for Winnipeg North referred to our urban transit program, and there again he broadly endorsed and supported what we said we wanted to do, what we intended to do, and what we had already done in part in terms of the commuter program and the commitment of money for that program and other urban transportation programs.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North was critical, and I understand that. His comments were legitimate opposition criticism of the fact that, to this point, our consideration of government restraint of spending has led us to delay implementing parts of what we wanted to do and what we said we intended to do. Therefore, again on a major policy question there is agreement except on the question of timing and on the question of spending money immediately. Of course an opposition can always be more ready to spend money in particular areas, but it reserves the right to criticize government spending as a whole.

What I want to do today is briefly touch on some of the matters hon. members opposite ignore when they criticize transportation policy. The very nature of the attacks and the debate demonstrate how much agreement there would have to be on where we are moving. It is true that yesterday some hon. members were critical of the moves which have been taking place in the Atlantic region in relation to a historic agreement reached between this government and the four Atlantic governments on how we should proceed to improve transportation in those provinces. It is worth noting that it is rather historic to get that kind of agreement on a variety of steps, including the transfer of money to support the movement of certain goods, money which ought to be spent in better ways to help the Atlantic region.

We ought to spend money to help with the shipment of goods and to pay the shipper rather than to apply it to a mode of shipment, so that the producer has a choice of shipment. We ought to examine very critically each form of our spending in transportation, and in the Atlantic region we reached an important agreement to add more money because of this