

Mr. Speaker, this is the type of situation that we wanted to draw to the attention of this House and this Government to show that, in our opinion, transport is vitally important, especially in Quebec, and that we have no intention of letting the Government dodge the issue during the coming weeks and months by establishing all kinds of committees and task forces allowing it not to honour its commitments.

The motion now under consideration allows us to bring this particular issue to the attention of the people and to make sure that pressure will be exerted in the right places. I know that some bankbenchers are as concerned as we are, about the commitments which were made and that they will help us to put pressure on the Minister of State and the Minister of Transport to deliver once and for all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Are there any questions or comments?

[English]

Since there are no questions or comments, I will recognize the next speaker.

• (1520)

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, I was simply hoping to outwait the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) or his second in command, the Hon. Member for Roberval (Mr. Bouchard), in the hopes that one of them would rise and respond to the motion put by a Member of the Liberal Party.

Before I go any further, I would like to say that I wish the Liberals would at least have the courtesy to blush when they have the nerve and the gall to move a motion involving transportation this soon after the election. Perhaps if they had waited a year or two until memories had gotten shorter, some things might have been forgotten. However, they have the nerve of a tom-cat. They bring in a motion about the cuts made to government programs and the election promises of the Conservative Government regarding the field of transportation.

I was anxious to hear from the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry, (Mr. Axworthy), the former Minister of Transport, on this motion. In fact, the motion should have been in his name. Since Liberal Members have that much nerve, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry should have been the one to rise and take the Conservatives to task for doing what he and the Liberals began. In fact, this action began back in 1974 with Otto Lang, of unlamented departure from this place.

Members of the Liberal Opposition should have decided to say nothing at all on this subject for at least a year or two. They should have given Conservative Members a chance to do something different. They chose not to do so. They have presented us with a motion with which we agree.

Let us begin by dealing with all of the talk, promises and speeches of Members of the Conservative Party before and during the federal election campaign. Commitments and pro-

Supply

mises were made. I will not read all of the Conservative press announcements and the notes from the Leader's speeches and the statements of the present Minister of Transport. However, we did hear about research and development. We heard about how the Government was going to increase its commitment to research and development and transcontinental passenger cars. What did we get? We got a cut of \$1.9 million in funding for research and development. That is what the Liberals were doing already.

Mr. Axworthy: We added to it. You are wrong again.

Mr. Benjamin: They added to it every year and then put it off each year. In fact, my good friend, the Minister of Transport, will recall how frustrated we as members of the Transport Committee were when dealing with Supplementary and Main Estimates. Each year the Liberals had all those items in the estimates and each year the items showed up again. Each year these estimates got transferred. They were transferred year after year after year. It did not matter whether the estimates were for VIA Rail, for airports or for anything else. It took 11 successive years to finally begin the airport expansion in Regina. I have been here while six Ministers of Transport have been in this place. I am a little tired of the same kind of activity being undertaken by all six of them, and that includes the present Minister of Transport.

Another small commitment dealt with VIA Rail. In Toronto on August 27, the now Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) said not only that there would be no cuts to VIA Rail but that there would be an additional \$10 million provided for 1985-86, and another \$10 million for 1986-87. What did we get? We got a \$93 million cut. I suppose one could add it all together and say that that totals \$113 million.

That cut will only make things worse for VIA Rail and for rail passenger transportation in the country. The increases that were once proposed by the now Prime Minister, while inadequate, would at least have further advanced the viability of VIA Rail. However, that is down the drain, not only for 1985-86 but for the year after as well.

There is another minor detail, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the Hon. Minister of Transport that we were to get, on an urgent basis, legislation to remove the grain cap. The Prime Minister said on August 27 that there would be an additional \$1 million allotted to that for 1985-86.

Mr. Mazankowski: It would not make any difference.

Mr. Benjamin: And an additional \$5 million for 1986-87. Of course, with the drought, all those Russian thistles, too much water in the North Saskatchewan, all of those grasshoppers and too many Tories and what not, the entire thing was meaningless. We exceeded the cap in the 1983-84 crop year. The ink on the legislation was hardly dry and we had already exceeded the cap. The Tories saved us from that. We have had a short crop season and the Hon. Minister of Transport could at least bring in a Bill to remove the cap.

Mr. Mazankowski: Sure.