

**Mr. Lang:** From one part of this country to the other we have been dealing with specific transportation problems within the broad framework of attempting to have an effective and efficient system but one which is always conscious of social needs and of the need for economic development. After all, this government and this Liberal party have long been in the forefront with policies to encourage the economic development of those areas where growth would otherwise be a good deal slower. Regions like the Atlantic region, from which the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) comes, have long recognized the importance to this country of the Liberal policy of regional economic expansion, moving the country forward and attempting to promote development. This policy emerges in our willingness to improve air facilities where the actual demands of traffic would not appear, on a dollars and cents basis alone, to justify those improvements. I think of the improvements currently going on at the Wabush, Charlo, Gander and St. Leonard airports. I think of some of the airports in the maritimes and the investment for regional development.

This clearly emphasizes our belief that areas where we want development to be encouraged require significant transportation expenditures, and we are prepared to make them. When we have little problems or problems of a specific kind, we attack them in a specific way. The farmers of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick were extremely concerned two years ago about the situation with regard to shipping their potatoes. They were concerned that old reefer cars were coming to the end of their lives, and they wondered where they were going to go. We created a working group composed of government representatives, railway representatives, representatives of potato marketing boards and producers and representatives of the provinces to tackle the problem on all fronts and to see what needed to be done. We learned the number of cars which were required. We found a way to ensure that when trucks were not available, insulated boxes got into the movement. Port improvements were made so that the receiving of that product could take place to the satisfaction of the people involved in its shipment. We acted directly to deal with their problems. We were required to ensure that the railways would have adequate cars, adequate in the view of the producers themselves and adequate for their marketing operations. We made arrangements to provide cars by taking on certain financial obligations against the risk of those cars not being used.

The hon. member for Vegreville comes from an area where grain is produced. He is a prairie member, yet in talking about transportation he did not seem to think it worthy to mention \$1 billion of expenditures already committed to the improvement of our grain handling and transportation system. Pursuant to government policy 8,000 hopper cars were purchased to ensure that there was more capacity for the movement of grain. I think of the \$700 million to \$800 million program for rebuilding branch lines on the prairies. For years, including years when there was a Tory government with a prairie prime minister and when most members of parliament from the

prairies were in that government or on government backbenches, nothing was done to create certainty or a future for the whole branch line and grain handling system on the prairies. Not a thing was done because they were afraid, in typical Tory fashion, to act.

The hon. member for Vegreville started out by talking about lack of decision and leadership. Those are not things usually laid at my doorstep. The hon. member is usually more apt to say I display too much of that, but I have always known of the political warning that if you stay away from problems, you are likely to be able to escape a lot of heartache because even solutions to problems have their own problems, as seen by the people they are meant to serve. I have never been a believer in that. I believe in looking at the problems facing the grain farmer and the grain handling and transportation system. This is true of others areas of transport. I believe in tackling problems, even at the significant risk of adverse reaction or worry about change.

● (1610)

I am used to hon. members opposite thinking up slogans. When we created a new quota system in 1970, they said it was going to damage the family farm and that Lang was out to hurt the family farm. That was their great cry in those days. Today farmers would not go back to the quota system we had before, which was disorganized. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, what the prairie Tories, having been in government for six years, left behind in terms of the management of the grain system? When quotas were open, there was no way of predicting what kind of grain was going to be put into elevators, whether or not it was grain that was wanted. There was no way of knowing whether the grain that was going to be shipped was the grain that was wanted at the terminals. It was only because in those days they were shipping so little grain that they could afford this haphazard system of letting the wrong grain go on the wrong day without much regard for it. The Wheat Board told me, when I became responsible for grain matters, that it used to have to order two bushels of grain for every one they wanted because 50 per cent of the grain that arrived was unwanted grain in terms of their shipping program.

In those Tory days we were exporting 300 million or 400 million bushels of grain a year. Since 1969, when I became responsible for grain transportation, the figure has been almost invariably 700 million bushels of grain or more, and of course in the last four years, including this year, over 800 million bushels of grain were exported.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lang:** But, Mr. Speaker, we do not talk about that as if it were a plateau on which we should rest, even though last year and this year we were setting records. Now we are talking about going 50 per cent higher six years from now, up to 30 million tons, 1,300 million bushels, for export, figures that dwarf anything the hon. member ever dreamed of.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!