

category. They were to be run temporarily by a new government agency called the Prairie Rail Authority, but they were not to be in the permanent network, they were not scheduled for upgrading, and they could be abandoned at any time by the PRA between 1977 and 1990. That is hardly a desirable situation. Farmers and farm organizations made it clear that such languishing uncertainty would be intolerable.

Accordingly, the federal government asked the Prairie Rail Action Committee to review these 2,400 miles of rail line left in that limbo state by the Hall report. The objective was to see if a higher degree of certainty about these lines could be achieved without waiting for Hall's doubtful period to expire in 1990. The PRAC report called for retention of about 1,000 of the rail miles studied. As I mentioned before, we have already acted to move each and every one of these rail lines into the permanent, basic, guaranteed network.

In the constituency of Assiniboia, the PRAC and the subsequent action of the federal government have saved and protected lines like the Wood Mountain subdivision from Maxstone to Mankota, the Avonlea subdivision from Moose Jaw to Avonlea and Claybank, the Tyvan subdivision from Regina to Stoughton, the Bromhead subdivision from Southall to Tribune, the Weyburn subdivision from Weyburn to Radville, the Amulet subdivision from Ormiston to Crane Valley, and the Gravelbourg subdivision from Mossbank to Hodgeville.

In the first six of these cases—I have just mentioned seven—we have taken doubtful lines left in limbo by the Hall commission and we have guaranteed them for the future as a result of the report of the Prairie Rail Action Committee. The significant part in assessing the opposition position is that the opposition parties in this House have exactly the opposite policy, and by totally rejecting the PRAC concept and by clinging as they do instinctively to the the Hall report, the Tories and the NDP are arguing for the doubt and uncertainty on these lines to continue for up to another 12 years.

In the case of the Gravelbourg subdivision, which was the seventh of the lines which I just mentioned, the opposition parties are arguing for continuing the limbo status of the portion from Mossbank to Gravelbourg through Bateman to Hodgeville—because that is what Hall recommended. The PRAC report helped to save the Gravelbourg line, but the Tories and the NDP have rejected the PRAC report in its entirety.

I believe that the evidence which I have cited this afternoon shows that the Prairie Rail Action Committee did a substantial amount of good and useful work and that it should not be rejected out of hand. We can each disagree with certain conclusions, and the conclusions are there, spelled out in detail, so one can see where it is possible to disagree because the arguments are there. If the PRAC has made mistakes, they are obvious on the face of the record and can be pointed out and questioned. Where the PRAC has proposed abandonment, the cases will be reviewed, as I said before, in due course by the CTC so we will have another opportunity to argue strenuously for retention. As I have indicated, I am working closely with many of the local groups involved in this effort in my

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area. The cases which we have to present are good ones, and I am optimistic about the prospects that we have for a positive and favourable conclusion.

In the final analysis, I am confident, as I have said, that we are now building effectively in western Canada toward a capacity where we will be able to move a billion bushels of grain, and beyond, each year with speed and efficiency. We have the marketing opportunities to move that grain, our farmers have the productive capacity, and I am sure that the grain industry, assisted by the Government of Canada, will be able to meet the challenge.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to raise a brief question of privilege in view of remarks by the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Goodale). It has been my observation in listening to the radio in Saskatchewan that someone is imitating the voice of the hon. member and saying that the PRAC has exceeded its jurisdiction. I just wanted him to know that.

Mr. Goodale: The hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn) will know that the remarks that I have made in that respect refer very specifically to one instance in the report of the PRAC having to do with the Lewvan subdivision running southeast from Regina. If the hon. member will wait for about 48 hours, I think that he will have some pleasant news in that regard.

Mr. Neil: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I may call it six o'clock.

Mr. Malone: A point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Six o'clock has been called by the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil). I will recognize the hon. member for Battle River (Mr. Malone) at eight o'clock when the House resumes.

It being six o'clock p.m., I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock p.m.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

● (2000)

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, in my opinion the debate this evening is a very important one and concerns a subject that really cannot be adequately dealt with in the time allotted to each speaker. This government, and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) in particular, have failed disastrously in the field of transportation. Because of the short time available to me, my remarks will be restricted to items Nos. (3) and (4) in the motion, which read as follows:

(3) to deal adequately with grain movement, resulting in losses of hundreds of millions of dollars to producers and to the Canadian economy;