

● (1450)

I would point out that already some 1,700 miles have been totally and completely rehabilitated and that another 3,500 miles of work is under way. That is due to the program announced by the Government in 1977 where we did a global attack on the whole branch line rehabilitation issue under Mr. Lang, the then Minister of Transport, for some \$700 million. The Government has added over \$300 million to that program, and we will be negotiating each line as we do every year with the railway and grain companies. I would say to the Hon. Member that \$1 billion is a very big commitment to branch line rehabilitation in western Canada.

Mr. Benjamin: I think I got my answer. It means that we will lose another 1,500 to 2,000 miles of branch lines.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, is it the Minister's intention to keep the Government's commitment to upgrade all branch lines in the basic network, or is it the intention to spend only the amount announced on February 1?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, the commitment of the Government in 1977 was to undertake a program of branch line rehabilitation according to the amount of dollars and fiscal resources we could allocate. The Government has now allocated a second round of resources to improve substantially and add to that sum, as the Hon. Member mentioned, to over \$1 billion. We will be negotiating those lines on a priority basis as the money is made available. The sooner and the better the NDP gets on board and supports the Crow expansion, railway modernization of western Canada branch lines will be better off.

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EMPLOYMENT

REQUEST FOR INTRODUCTION OF WAGE SUBSIDY PROGRAM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Given the disastrous youth unemployment in the country, is it the intention of the Government to introduce a wage subsidy program for young people, based on the British experience, so that young people can obtain experience in the workplace? Is it his intention to bring in such a program? If so, why does he feel it is necessary to wait for prorogation and a new Speech from the Throne, when in fact he already has the mechanism in place to implement such a program now with the Access Program, the Portable Wage Subsidy Program, and the program for the disadvantaged? He has the mechanism now. Why does he not implement the program now?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I am simply astounded by the Hon.

Oral Questions

Member's question. There is such a program. It is the Career Access Program to which the Hon. Member has just referred.

BRITISH MODEL

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, the Minister knows that the Career Access Program was announced in April and is not even operative yet, notwithstanding the ongoing concerns of the country over youth unemployment. My question concerns the British model of training young people and giving them a start, a kite which the Minister has flown not once but twice, and as recently as today in *Maclean's* magazine. Obviously he is committed to the program, and I am sure that he has read *Maclean's* magazine. Does the Minister intend to bring in such a program to help these 600,000 young people who are unemployed? If so, why does he not bring it in now instead of waiting for another session of Parliament?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I regret to say that I have not read *Maclean's* magazine. I will rush out and read *Maclean's* magazine. I have been informed by my staff, who are usually reliable, that I am not in *Maclean's* magazine. The fact is that the program is in place. We expect it to deal with at least 31,000 young people this year and 31,000 people next year. We think it is a more effective program than the kind which has been put in operation by Mrs. Thatcher because it is a program which deals with young people between the ages of 17 years and 25 years, whereas Mrs. Thatcher's program concentrates only on teenagers. We think there are other young people who deserve our attention as well.

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GRAIN

GRAIN STABILIZATION PROGRAM

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport who is spokesman for the Canadian Wheat Board in this House. When farmers were encouraged to enter into the grain stabilization agreement with the Government, the promise was that there would be a payout in a year of low grain prices. We had that year of low grain prices last year and the fund is now built up to approximately \$800 million. When will the Government be announcing a payout to farmers?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, as the Hon. Member knows, the assessment is made on a five-year average on the stabilization fund. Based upon that average in which there has been a reasonably decent price for grain, we do not expect a payout in this year.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Towers: That is declaring war on the western Canadian farmer. He will retaliate, and don't ever think he won't.