

spending to the taxpayers of a community? You could depend on them.

I thought the level of responsibility in this senior place of government would be much more efficient. But I found out, much to my dismay, that because of the direction of 16 years of Liberal Government there is very little responsibility with regard to commitments, either made to the people or even written in stone, as it were.

Rehabilitation of rail lines should go ahead. Nothing is more important. In terms of grain and grain transportation some \$6 billion were added to the balance of payments. That is important to the welfare of farmers, but it is more important to the welfare of the whole country to do something positive. The Government should do something positive instead of picking up broken pieces of bad business obligations with which it gets encumbered from time to time.

I would like to speak for a moment about the area of rail line abandonment, particularly as it relates to my riding. It is only fair to say that farms in other areas experience the same type of problem. We had hearings at Rockglen, concerning the Big Beaver-Coronach line, some over a year ago. At that time we raised with the CTC the issue of the lines involving Big Beaver to Coronach, the Avonlea-Parry line and other lines. I raised in writing with the Minister the importance of maintaining the Big Beaver-Coronach line. On two occasions I raised the matter with him in committee. When Mr. Marchand, the President of the Canadian Transportation Commission, appeared I raised once more the concern of this rail line. I must say good attention was paid. I even think the letters were read, but I must say we have not been getting any answers.

Consider yourself, Mr. Speaker, living in Big Beaver, Saskatchewan. From Big Beaver to Coronach is 20 miles and it is up-hill all the way. Let me suggest you had a three-ton truck, a 1957 Chevy and its motor was not too good.

Mr. Mazankowski: And you have a blow-out.

Mr. Gustafson: You are heading for town, up hill at 30 miles an hour in second gear, and you have a blow-out.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gustafson: It is no laughing matter, Mr. Speaker. It is so serious it is laughable. I want to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the farmers along that line are very concerned.

We have been getting the same kind of answers from a very neglectful Government and Minister. The transport portfolio is probably one of the most important in the Parliament of Canada. Transportation is very important to a Canada that stretches thousands of miles from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the 49th parallel to the Arctic. It is most important to the survival of a people who have to compete in international markets, especially when you have the type of irresponsible approach that we have seen in past days. I am absolutely astounded that this is beginning to happen so quickly and that the Government should renege on its responsibilities with

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regard to rail line rehabilitation and rebuilding. Certainly it is a most important matter which should be dealt with.

• (1620)

What situations are created by abandoning a rail line such as the Big Beaver-Coronach line? I think we have to take several matters into consideration. First, it devalues the land. Certainly that is important to farmers who have to compete in an economic sense with other farmers. In addition there are fuel costs. We cannot look at transportation unless we look at fuel costs.

Mr. Mazankowski: They have doubled.

Mr. Gustafson: This is significant because if we go back to December 13, 1979 we were defeated on an 18-cent gasoline tax. Our government made the mistake of being honest; that is the only way I can put it. At that time we said that the gasoline tax would be increased by 18 cents. After being defeated I returned home and I must say I was somewhat disappointed. We were in for eight or nine months and then we were out. I drove into a filling station in the little Town of Macoun and I asked what was the price of gas. I filled up my tank at a cost of 92 cents per gallon. Just the other day I telephoned that same filling station in that little town and was told that the cost of fuel was \$1.80 per gallon. Do Hon. Members remember the promise of the Liberals? They said they would not increase it more than the 18 cents the Conservatives had suggested. Gasoline prices and fuel costs to farmers have doubled in four years. It is just another example.

How does this relate to transportation? Its relationship is very simply, because it costs twice as much today to fill up a truck with gas to haul grain to the elevator so that it can be put on world markets. Certainly fuel costs are of concern. The cost of the gas moving from the City of Regina down to Plentywood, Montana—and there are semi-truckloads of gas going down there every day—is 78 cents per gallon. That tells us how much federal tax we have on fuel in this country.

I see Mr. Speaker signalling that my time is up. No subject is more important to Canada, especially to our farmers, than western grain transportation. If anyone honestly looks at the facts as they exist, he will realize that the Government has been very neglectful in its responsibilities and in keeping its promises to the people of Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Are there questions or comments related to the remarks of the hon. gentleman? The Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson).

Mr. Nickerson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to get this entirely straight in my mind. Did I gather from the speech of the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) that he still has one or two small doubts about the Liberal western grain transportation policy?

Mr. Gustafson: Mr. Speaker, in answering that question let me say I really wish that I had only one or two small doubts. I have some grave concerns about the Liberal program for