

Supply

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 62—TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Mazankowski:

That whereas a sound national transportation system is essential for economic growth in Canada, this House condemns the Minister of Transport for issuing contradictory statements which have created uncertainty and confusion in the transportation industry and amongst users of the transportation system, and for his failure to fulfill his promises and commitments relating to the creation of jobs and investment and the improvement of rail service under the Western Grain Transportation Act; the modernization and upgrading of passenger rail service; the reduction of domestic air fares in 1984; the improvement of transportation safety in all modes; and the revitalization of Canada's marine industries.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I rise to comment and discuss some of the interesting proposals that have been put forward. First I want to thank the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) for having listed so eloquently the number of accomplishments we have been able to bring forward in the last six or seven months. We do, of course, have some quarrel with the interpretation that he puts upon those various initiatives. He seems to interpret them purely as matters of political response as opposed to what they clearly are, that is, responding to the clear public requirement for change.

I do not expect Tories to understand reform and change. We know full well that it is not in their mentality to understand how to go about changing something and bring about an improvement. As we know, they are defenders of the status quo, the established interest of the people who are simply digging their heels into the trenches and unable to make any judgement as to where we should go to bring about improvement in this country. It is understandable that they would be just a trifle vexed when a Minister or a government comes along with some ideas, energy and enthusiasm to make changes in the very important transportation system.

I can understand the frustration of the Hon. Member for Vegreville. If we add up the list of what has happened in the last six months and compare it to the absolute zero of what happened in his nine months, the comparison is slightly odious. I understand his personal pique, his sense of frustration that he does not find himself in a position of being able to make those kinds of complimentary comparisons. I appreciate the fact that he has been awake long enough to know what we are doing. He is now trying to ride the coattails and attach himself to those initiatives.

Now the Hon. Member is saying, "Me too". He is beginning to sound like his Leader. All of a sudden he is finding that there are policies out there. Just like the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Mulroney), he is going around saying, "We have policies", not that we have seen them. The Member for Vegreville is now properly saying that they believe in better prices for air travel. Why did he not do something about it?

He says they believe in doing something about passenger rail service. Why did he not do something about it when he had the opportunity? All that we hear from the other side is a confession, the fact that they wish they had tried to adopt what we are doing. They are trying to piggyback and coattail on the very important developments in which we are engaged.

It is important in describing those developments to clear up some of the confusion. If I can make one small criticism of the Hon. Member for Vegreville, it is that he is ignorant. He does not really relate the facts as they are. If you do not mind, Mr. Speaker, I wish to use a moment or two to clear up those problems. I am sure the Hon. Member would like to know a little more about our transportation system. This is the opportunity to tell him about it.

First, let us talk about the impact of the grain transportation Bill. The major initiative to provide for a competitive, productive transportation system is the single most important development in western Canada and in the economic life in this country in this decade. Who was opposed to it? Who did not have the guts to recognize that change was required? The Member for Vegreville and his colleagues. They say we should have an improved transportation system, but they opposed what everyone acknowledged had to take place, namely, a change in the system to allow us to compete for markets abroad.

I read recently in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* a comment made by a high official in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He said that in the 1970s they were able to take markets away from the Canadian producer because of the poor quality of our delivery system, but in the 1980s we are going to take markets away from them because we are now making the changes that we recognize have to be made. That shows that we have the guts, the will and the motivation to make the necessary change, not to hide behind some reactionary cloak of "It's not time", not to find excuses for not making change. Those changes are now going ahead.

The railways have committed \$1.1 billion in new investment. We are buying hopper cars in Trenton, Nova Scotia in the constituency of the Member's Leader. We are buying locomotives in London. The Beaver Tunnel tenders are now out for call. It will be the single largest construction project going on in North America. That system is being brought up to capacity right now because this Government had the motivation and purpose to make a decision, which the Conservative Party did not have, and never will have because they do not know how to make decisions. They do not know how to make change or reform.

We are now prepared to look at the new forecasts for that railway system. This morning in Winnipeg, and unfortunately I was prevented from attending, the Senior Grain Transportation Committee is looking at the railways' investment plans, reviewing them to see how adequate they are. We believe that that judgement should be made by all the participants in the system. The railways, producers and grain companies are all there this morning to review those investment plans and to give advice to the Government as to whether they are adequate. We