

Market stresses will force this kind of centralization eventually. That is a fallacy which comes from a lack of understanding of the people and their way of life. It even lacks an understanding of the history of many countries throughout the world.

Centralization of the control of land in the hands of a few, an inevitable result of the present policy, has happened in many countries in the world. In fact, it was the place where many countries started. In Britain it was called feudalism and it took many years for that country to get rid of the situation where the lord owned the land and the people as well. They finally went from being tenant farmers to private owners of land. Many countries in the Third World, in Asia, South America, Central America and Africa, suffer from this problem of centralized ownership of land.

I am not suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that that is going to happen here, but there is a parallel which should not be ignored. Even now in the State of Kansas a large portion of land is centrally owned and farmed by tenant farmers. That is not our way of life. Centralization is not inevitable or even necessary. Right now in Saskatchewan, viable farm size varies from a quarter section to ten and 20 sections. In many cases small farmers pay as much income tax as the large ones, which implies that ten families could make as good a living on those ten sections as one family does now.

The effect of this Bill will be to force centralization by elimination of the farmer who is small, regardless of how efficient he is. The day may come when there is a move back to small farms. Economic pressures and high-tech may dictate the direction in which we move in the future where we will need those railways and those branch lines. The time may come when, because of the population of Canada and the need for food in the world, we will be forced to use more efficient methods of farming, of food production. There is no doubt in my mind, and I am sure no doubt in the mind of anyone who has lived on the Prairies, that the small farm is a more efficient producer than is the large farm. We are not planning for that in passing this Bill.

Many people are protesting this particular Bill. They protested it when it started as the Gilson-Pepin report, and they are protesting it now. How are they voicing those protests? We have received around 30,000 letters and signatures, and taking into account what the Minister must have received directly, probably many more than those 30,000 citizens have voiced their protests. We have had letters of endorsement of Crow retention from rural municipalities, from town councils, from cities like Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Yorkton and Melville, from villages, from chambers of commerce, from church groups. In fact, just the other day the Minister received a letter from the Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle, a very conservative group.

The original proposal did not have consensus, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has admitted that. This Bill which he has put forward has even less, he is finding. The Minister should seek consensus for such important legislation. The essence of democracy is that the Government have the consent of the governed. The essence of democracy is that the Government

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have the essence of the governed. This Government has forgotten that essence. The Minister has never had the consent of the people who are most affected by this Bill.

I have attempted this day, Mr. Speaker, to say why this legislation is tenaciously being fought by the grassroots western farmers, who feel betrayed by their own organizations and by the Government. These two groups are attempting to negotiate away part of the farmers' way of life, the part which they built and in which they took pride.

● (1640)

The committee will be considering the main parts of the Bill which we have been debating. I would advise the Minister to put the Bill away for some time and to reconsider it later. Let him return with a plan that allows the West to be what it has been and can be, as suggested in the amendment.

Mr. Flis: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member spent a lot of time on centralization. I believe this is a very important issue. Much centralization has already occurred. Delivery points have already been centralized and the sizes of farms and towns have already been centralized. There are small towns where I live such as Hendon, Saskatchewan and Wadena, Saskatchewan which still have branch lines but the towns are dying out. This trend has occurred even with the present Crow rate in place.

On what studies is the Hon. Member basing his allegation that the abandonment of branch lines will cause this centralization that he is talking about? Because it has already occurred with the present Crow rate.

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point I was trying to make. There is a certain amount of centralization and it is affecting the way of life of the western farmer who has been there for a long time and wants to remain there. Centralization is resulting in larger farms which will produce less grain.

The Crow rate is simply one more factor. If we had had variable rates before, as we will have in the future, centralization would have occurred much sooner. We would not be concerned about that issue today because it would have already happened.

The responsibility of Governments is to do what is best for the people of the country, not for the big manufacturers. Right now the people in western Canada do not want to move off the farms but they are being forced to do so. Where can they go but to the cities in order to get jobs which do not exist?

Our farm population could be doubled. The provincial Government in Saskatchewan has said recently that there are now 12,000 more people on the farms than there were a couple of years ago. There are 12,000 more because they had somewhere to go. In Kansas, however, where there are tenant farmers, there is nowhere to go.

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my first words are to say to the Minister that I think the House owes a great debt to him for patiently listening to us today. We feel extremely sorry for him, being left out to swing