

Two-Price Wheat Act

This brings me to another point, however. This country operates under an accepted order of law, and that order of law is the British North America Act, our constitution. Our constitution provides that resources belong to the provinces. Ontario confirmed that point approximately 50 years ago by taking that section to the Supreme Court of Canada.

We in the west have always paid the world price for Ontario's resources because that is what the constitution says. That is what the Supreme Court of Canada says. Now with respect to oil they seem to be backing down. I say to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that he has a constitutional duty to uphold the constitution. He should be defending Alberta and its ownership of that resource, and not attacking it.

Both Germany and Japan went immediately to world prices and, of course, they have the strongest world economies. We could do the same.

In terms of history, hon. members will recall that in 1905 when Alberta was created it was given all the powers of a province except control of its natural resources. The reason seemed to be a central Liberal government thinking that colonialists could not truly run their own affairs, an attitude which this Liberal government still reflects.

Alberta was governed by a Liberal provincial government from 1905 to 1921, and throughout that period it pressed the central Liberal government for control of resources. The central government refused. In 1921 the United Farmers of Alberta were elected as the provincial government, and they continued to press for return of the resources. The result was that in 1930 we achieved a transfer agreement, and we took control of resources. However, interestingly enough, the issue was so difficult and so heated that at the 1924 annual convention of the UFA party a resolution providing that Alberta separate from the union was debated. This shows the depth of feeling, and I must say in all good faith that Albertans have that same capacity and that same depth of feeling about their energy resources today.

We then entered into the thirties and the horrible depression. It took a decade or more out of the lives of people like my parents and the generation just before mine. The people of western Canada did not have the support of the central government, and they made necessary and hard adjustments to their lives. They abandoned their homesteads. Three out of every four had to leave their homesteads. They lost their homes and their dreams. As a result, in 1935 the Social Credit Party came to power. They were a government which tried solutions. They were again, however, frustrated by the central government. There were some ten statutes or amendments which were struck down by the federal power of disallowance or by the Supreme Court of Canada.

The point is that it was a government which was trying to address the problems of people who were suffering and starving on their lands and having to abandon their farms. The BNA Act in that case was used against the people of Alberta when they were trying to get their electricity and their manufactured goods from central Canada at less than world price.

An hon. Member: Talk about the bill.

Mr. Lalonde: The bill is about wheat.

Mr. Thacker: The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources really seems upset today, and that is very interesting. He is usually pretty cool, but I think we have hit a soft spot with him.

Mr. Lalonde: What about the bill?

Mr. Thacker: What I am explaining with regard to this Two-Price Wheat Act is how it ties in with a broad spectrum of actions by the central government which is leading to a tremendous potential for separation in western Canada. It is important that these points be made.

It is not that the west has not tried. In 1937 William Aberhart as premier of Alberta presented "The Case for Alberta". That brief covered our concerns about freight rates, tariff rates, transportation and marketing of western products. There was no meaningful response.

This bill could have been discussed in 1937. We have been saying exactly the same things. There has been no change since.

During the forties when we were trying to develop the oil industry, central Canada had an opportunity to invest. It refused. Hon. members should listen to Senator Manning. He gives a very emotional speech about his personal efforts to raise money in central Canada to develop the oil industry, but none was available. It was all kept for central Canada. That is the only reason that the oil industry is so heavily owned now by Americans, Dutch, and British. It is ironic that central Canadians would not put their money into their own country and that people from the United Kingdom, the United States and Holland did. Now that they own the business, central Canada is crying in its beer.

Time again passed. In 1969, 22 years after Aberhart had presented "The Case for Alberta", another premier, Premier Strom, came here and dealt again with exactly the same things: freight rates, tariff inequities, transportation problems and marketing problems. The result was exactly the same—nothing.

Then we come to 1973. At the Western Economic Opportunity Conference in Calgary the same issues again were discussed. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) came with solemn promises of a meaningful response. The results were simply platitudes, and at the end of that conference the premier of Alberta, Premier Lougheed, was moved to say, and I quote:

Obviously we failed to get through to you the spirit and potential of western Canada. We would have traded all the specific policies you announced here just for that understanding alone.

That is what I am saying today on the Two-Price Wheat Act. It is again a reflection of the majority being elected from central Canada and, even giving them the very best of good faith, they did not genuinely understand what we in the west were and are saying.