

toward the planned abandonment of these railway lines by 1975, because we, in Saskatchewan, are not going to take the present situation lightly. We do not care who we may be accused of being in collusion with. We want to stop the abandonment of railroad lines in Saskatchewan.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nesdoly: Now, there is talk out west about a great plains project, or something of that kind. A bunch of easterners came out west to make proposals—there was not a westerner on the committee—and they came up with a great many ideas which were going to save the west. At a meeting we held several months ago the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) suggested that the only idea they had not come up with was to cross a boxcar with a goose so that it could fly by itself.

• (1710)

I was rather disappointed, in examining the Speech from the Throne, to note there was nothing said about native rights. I think I will leave that part of my speech because the hon. member for the Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth) covered the subject yesterday, and I agree with what he said. One thing I would mention is that we must remember that the Indians and Eskimos of Canada were the original Canadians. During this entire battle over bilingualism and multiculturalism not much has been said about native rights, and that is very disappointing.

It would be interesting to see what the implications are in the throne speech for the so-called western conference on development of the northern frontiers of the four western provinces. Because my constituency covers half the northern frontier of Saskatchewan, perhaps this statement represents just a tiny flicker of hope for the constituents of Meadow Lake. For too long the people of that constituency have been waiting for some sort of coherent transportation and communications policy for the north. People from Green Lake to La Loche want better radio service. Television service is something they just do not have. Toronto has 11 channels but the people of the north have none. They have been told there are some long-range plans in this respect.

Mail service in that area has to be improved. For example, a post office is required at Turnor Lake. This is a community that had 126 voters on the voters' list, with approximately 400 people living there. There is a road to this village which is 50 miles from the next community with a post office. Their mail and pay cheques are picked up by one resident and put on the store-counter in the village, but often they are lost. Surely these people are entitled to postal service.

An hon. Member: Not under this government.

Mr. Nesdoly: People throughout the north would like better roads. Many roads have been built, but we have to develop a better economic base there; the provincial government has had some difficulty finding the finances necessary. Roads are required to places like Pinehouse, Patuanak, Dillon, and a road to the south shore of Lake Athabasca is certainly something required in the long range because the people of Uranium City require access to the outside world. We do not want Edmonton to be the

commencement of all transportation to the northern part of the province.

It is interesting to note that in the last seven years some \$464 million has been spent by federal authorities on road construction and improvements. Some of these expenditures were under cost-sharing agreements with the provinces and covered roads to the frontier regions. Some of the money was spent on national parks and Indian reserves. It is interesting to note that Saskatchewan received only \$2.17 million, or 0.6 per cent of the total expenditures, yet within the boundaries of our province there is just a little less than 5 per cent of the total population of this country, with 27 per cent of the nation's roads. That is something that members of this House may not be aware of. In my view this is not justice and equality of opportunity for the people of my constituency or the people of my native province.

Let me suggest that when we start talking about the development of the northern frontiers of the west, high on the agenda should be placed the whole matter of communications, transportation and aid to small industries. If Saskatchewan's north is to be developed, it must have roads, it must have communications facilities. Certainly, if we had had proper communications facilities the type of thing that happened on election night would not have happened. Nobody knew where he stood until at least a week after the election. I was one of those who was saved, by the grace of God, at the last minute.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Another John Wesley.

Mr. Nesdoly: The crash program to increase employment rather intrigues me. Some months before the election the western premiers asked the Prime Minister of Canada whether he would announce the winter works projects early in the season so that suitable plans could be formulated before the prairie winter set in. Some projects are just now being approved. It is pretty hard to start building something in certain parts of Saskatchewan where four days ago it was 40 below in the morning. I defy any hon. member to put on mitts and go out there and hammer nails.

In October, a few weeks before the election, the government announced a local initiatives program that was to be financed to the tune of \$85 million. I understand this has now been increased to \$165 million. From my constituency, up to the end of last December, approximately 40 local initiative project applications had been received. To date, seven have been approved, although information in this regard does not flow very quickly. I understand one more was approved this morning. I do not know what the dispensation of the rest of the money has been. I know that four or five applications have been rejected outright. It is interesting to note that seven of the 40 applications have been approved—perhaps now it is eight; I want to be fair. The total cost is \$172,178.

Let us do some simple arithmetic and divide the \$165 million approved for local initiative projects by 264, the number of constituencies in Canada. This gives us a figure of \$625,000 per constituency. It appears to me that the constituency of Meadow Lake is not getting its fair share of the Local Initiatives Program grants that are