

*The Address—Mr. Skoberg*

repeating, that 51 per cent of the people in Canada are directly or indirectly connected with the agricultural economy of Canada. For some reason, particularly in central Canada, this fact seems to evade some hon. members of the House. This government must recognize the fact that 51 per cent of the people are directly or indirectly connected with agriculture. Those people must be looked after. They must be listened to and their wishes made known. There must be planned economy and planned involvement.

A typical example of what was not done this year was the granting of a three-bushel quota for Durum wheat. The elevators in my district were full of Durum wheat, but the government opened the quota. The elevator agent is saying, "I have a little room, but I do not want more Durum. What can I do?" In spite of this, the government left the quota at three bushels of Durum. Is this the planning about which they talk? Planning must go further than just saying, "we are going to obtain an eight bushel quota this year come hell or high water, so we will do everything we can to get the eight bushels there as quickly as possible."

Some hon. members have already spoken about participation by those most directly involved in the production of a particular resource or material. This question could be referred to the task force on agriculture. Has this government asked the opinions of those directly involved in agriculture? I suggest it has not. The task force on agriculture will hold a meeting in Ottawa in November. At the same time, the farmers of western Canada will hold regional meetings throughout the west to get the opinions of producers in respect of the task force on agriculture. Instead of waiting for these farmers to formulate an opinion to pass on to their representatives in Ottawa, the government goes blissfully along suggesting that which has no basis. They say, to heck with the producer. It is not too late for the government to reverse the decision of the task force on agriculture. I ask all hon. members with authority, particularly the hon. member for Assiniboia, to urge the minister to delay the conference which is to be held in Ottawa.

Questions have been raised in this House with regard to the marketing bill and protein grading. It must be admitted without hesitation that these bills were delayed, but not by us. Canadians need a national marketing act and a bill to provide for protein grading. There must be equal representation in so far as the regulations are concerned and the adjustment to be taken into consideration concerning these two bills.

It has been said in this chamber that there must be active participation by people across this nation. I agree with the hon. member who stated yesterday that more Canadians must feel they are part of this institution. Every member is obligated to make his constituents sincerely believe they are part of this institution. Because of the lack of participation by the people of this nation we are confronted with such a serious situation today. I urge members of all parties to at least speak to those in the schools at their earliest convenience. It may be too late to speak to some people, but those in the schools should be

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told they can participate in bills before this House by making representations, they might feel they are not too far from Ottawa.

I will now turn to one of my favourite subjects, decentralization. I see no reason at all for the centralization of all government departments here in Ottawa, bearing in mind modern means of communication which are available. I believe the public would get better service if departments were decentralized. If information is needed quickly, those concerned can punch a computer in Ottawa and get the answer. I am sure every area of Canada would benefit from the decentralization of government offices, and I think this would apply not only to the federal government but to the services of provincial governments. If we really want to take government to the people, we have an obligation to do exactly this.

• (5:20 p.m.)

I was extremely pleased to hear what the hon. member for Wellington-Grey (Mr. Howe) said last night. I was also very pleased to hear the references which the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher) has just finished making to transportation problems affecting various areas. Last week an attempt was made to appear before the Canadian Transport Commission in Regina and put forward views with regard to the rationalization program of the CPR. The president of the Transport Commission, Hon. J. W. Pickersgill, once again saw fit to take the chair at those hearings. Submissions, which he accepted, were made on behalf of six Members of Parliament. I had prepared a statement for submission. He reserved judgment on whether to accept it at the Ottawa hearings beginning next week. I shall read from the *Leader-Post* an item headed, "Pickersgill to Reserve Judgment on Statement".

J. W. Pickersgill, Canadian Transport Commission president, Friday reserved judgment on whether to receive a statement prepared by John Skoberg, NDP Member of Parliament for Moose Jaw, for presentation at the rail transport committee hearings in Regina.

Mr. Pickersgill did not allow Mr. Skoberg to read a statement at the close of the Regina hearings into the CPR's proposal to reduce service provided by "The Canadian," and to increase fares.

The commission president said he would reserve judgment, examine the statement prepared by Mr. Skoberg and announce his decision at the railway transport committee's hearings in Ottawa later.

Further on, the report continues:

Mr. Pickersgill said the references to the commissioners were "irrelevant and rather offensive". He said the commission was set up and the commissioners were appointed by the Canadian government. He said Parliament was "the proper forum" for this type of discussion and directed Mr. Skoberg to discontinue that line of discussion.

Later, when the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) was trying to pursue a point in the brief, Mr. Pickersgill made a further observation. The newspaper report reads:

Mr. Pickersgill, a former Liberal MP and former cabinet minister said Parliament was the forum for proposing the changes suggested by Mr. Benjamin.