

The Address—Mr. Nesdoly

Mr. Nesdoly: I appreciated the remarks of the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands (Miss MacDonald). I believe she is the only speaker so far who has referred to principles. Perhaps we should speak a lot more in this House about principles. Perhaps I should turn now to the text of the speech I have here. I am not very good at speaking off the cuff, although I did not do too badly in that regard in my constituency. However, my knees are shaking a bit now.

• (1700)

First of all, I should like to point out that when I speak on behalf of the constituency of Meadow Lake, I speak in a very real sense on behalf of all Canada, because 84,000 square miles of the constituency I represent is in reality a microcosm of Canada. From farming and ranching areas in the south, we move into the lake and forest country toward the north, and lumbering, fishing, trapping; a natural gas field, some hardrock mining, and, in particular, uranium mines, one of them presently producing and another which will be producing next year. It is true we lack a city, a concrete jungle, but that is something we feel we can do without. The entire area is interspersed with 32 Indian reserves and inhabited by people who have come here from all parts of the world to make their homes.

A good deal has been said in this debate about national unity. To many people in my area, the entire question of national unity is a very remote one because they have already learned to live with each other and borrow the best from each other's cultures.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nesdoly: I have been a guest in English homes where they served Vareneyke; I have been in French homes where they have served Hungarian goulash. When I was in Arborfield, my wife learned to prepare all these dishes as well and she offered them gladly to all our neighbours who wanted to try some of her Ukrainian recipes. Today, we in Saskatchewan have solved a good many of our social problems. It has been a long history. History tells us about the northwest rebellion and the hanging of Louis Riel, as well as the bungling which was responsible for it. Nowadays, in Saskatchewan, our history books consider Riel to have been a patriot, not a rebel. History tells us about the Ku Klux Klan and some of the weird associations formed by it. There were cross-burning ceremonies in the Moose Jaw hills, and people telling men in the sheepskin coats to go back where they came from. This was rather like the immigration backlash which was supposed to have occurred during the last election. In my opinion, that is a somewhat shameful thing. Occasionally there are instances of discrimination against the so-called men in the sheepskin coats. In the past, there were a great many more.

There were many hard times. I can recall the relief measures of the 'thirties, along with the "Bennett Buggy" and the Anderson cart, low wheat prices, poor wheat sales, and the march to Ottawa which was stopped, not without some bloodshed, in Regina. It is because of these many hardships experienced that we in Saskatchewan attempted to develop a type of society just a little different from that in other parts of Canada. As a son of

[Mr. Nesdoly.]

Saskatchewan, I am proud of the fact that we were in the forefront of the movement for hospitalization, medicare, compulsory auto insurance, better schools, and other social and much-needed reforms. We conceived the hospitalization legislation in 1948, and much to the credit of the administration of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), a national hospitalization scheme was introduced in the late 'fifties or the early 'sixties. Medicare followed in 1967, introduced by the Pearson government after a lot of birth pains and Liberal promises dating back to 1919.

Despite the fact that we have overcome many of our problems, many still remain at both provincial and federal levels. Here, I am mainly concerned about federal responsibilities. I should like to express a few ideas in relation to my constituency—and what applies to my constituency applies, also, to many other areas in my province and in Canada. To me, it seems that if the Liberal and Conservative parties had their way they would abandon something like 3,000 miles of Saskatchewan rail lines. It all started with the MacPherson Commission under the Conservatives and now it appears it will be finished by the Liberals hiding behind the Canada Grains Council. If those railway tracks are abandoned, Mr. Speaker, more than 300 communities in Saskatchewan will disappear. I heard someone say "Manitoba, too". Yes, this applies to Manitoba as well as to other western provinces. If these tracks are abandoned at least 800 elevators will close down and costs to farmers for shipping and handling will be greatly increased. No doubt the railways will save some money. But the cost will be borne by the producers and by the people who pay taxes in the Meadow Lake constituency.

These are some of the effects rail line abandonment will have on the constituency of Meadow Lake which were revealed by some research we did before the election: one, more than 253 miles of railway line will be abandoned. Two, in the past ten years, an average of 4.4 million bushels of grain have been carried over those tracks each year. That grain would have to be trucked. Three, more than 2.39 million bushels of grain elevator capacity would be closed down. Four, other farm services would disappear as elevators closed down, for example, supplies of fertilizer and lumber. Other services would soon move out of the community. People would lose their local stores, service stations, recreation facilities and other benefits. Five, more than 1,655 farmers in the constituency would have to haul their grain longer distances in large trucks. Six, the grid road and municipal systems, as well as other highways, would need to be totally rebuilt to handle the larger trucks, and higher taxes would be the result. Seven, tax revenue losses to municipalities would be extremely high. For example, on the basis of 1964 figures—and the situation has probably worsened since then—the Village of Shell Lake would lose 21.36 per cent of its total tax revenues. Spiritwood would lose 18.4 per cent of its tax revenues and Paradise Hill would lose 16.34 per cent.

Such losses, and those sustained in other communities, would have to be made up by local residents. The government has made some nebulous mention of transportation in the Speech from the Throne. Nevertheless, I should like to see spokesmen on the front bench opposite make a clear statement immediately concerning their attitude