

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Fifth Session — Eleventh Legislature
26th Day

Friday, March 14, 1952.

The House met at three o'clock p.m.
On the Orders of the Day

Mr. Harry Gibbs (Swift Current): — Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a correction with regard to an item that was in the Corridor and Chamber of the Leader-Post yesterday. It is dealing with a quotation of that friend of mine, dealing with Socialism, and it goes on to say:

" . . . but sometimes he leaves his listeners slightly bewildered, and here, for example, is a portion of his Budget Debate speech:

"And that reminds me of a quotation of what Socialism means to an old lady friend of mine, which is worth repeating. This is what she had to say, what, to her, socialism was: "I believe in the full plan of life, the intellectual with the physical, the spiritual and the social. Socialism then, means to me, is this — how can I be happy intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially, if you are happy intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially."

Now, it should have read, and according to the transcript here, it should have been:

"How can I be happy intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially, if you are not happy intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially."

That means a lot — that three-letter word "not" — and you did not put it in; so you can correct that.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE

Moved by the Hon. Mr. Douglas (Weyburn), seconded by the Hon. Mr. Nollet:

That this assembly, recognizing

- (a) that in recent years the rapid increase of farm mechanization and the widespread adoption of new agricultural methods have resulted in basic changes in rural life, and the farm economy of Saskatchewan, and

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(b) that these economic trends are creating new rural social problems as well as adversely affecting the ability of our young people to become established in the agricultural industry, and

(c) that these trends also offer an opportunity for further extending the amenities of rural life,

agrees it is advisable that the Provincial Government should appoint a Royal Commission to investigate and make recommendations regarding the requirements for the maintenance of a sound farm economy and the improvement of social conditions and amenities in rural Saskatchewan, and

recommends that such Commission, in its inquiry and recommendations, have particular reference to:

(1) the problems involved in present day trends in agricultural production, land use and farm costs;

(2) the need for farm capital and credit;

(3) the further adaptation of social services and educational facilities to meet changing rural conditions; and

(4) the further development of rural transportation, communication and community services.

Hon. T.C. Douglas (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, in rising to propose this motion, I probably ought to read it first to the Assembly just to get the background of the few remarks which I am going to make pertaining to it.

"This Assembly recognizing that in recent years, the rapid increase in farm mechanization and the widespread adoption of new agricultural methods have resulted in basic changes in rural life and the farm economy of Saskatchewan, and that these economic trends are creating new rural social problems, as well as adversely affecting the ability of young people to become established in the agricultural industry, and that these trends also offer an opportunity for further extending the amenities of rural life, agrees that it is advisable that the Provincial Government should appoint a Royal Commission to investigate and make recommendations regarding the requirements for the maintenance of a sound farm economy, and the improvement of social conditions, and the amenities in rural Saskatchewan, and recommends that such Commission, in its enquiry and recommendation, have particular reference to:

- (1) The problems involved in present day trends in agricultural production, land use and farm costs;
- (2) The need for farm capital and credit;
- (3) The further adaptation of social services and educational facilities to meet changing rural conditions, and
- (4) The further development of rural transportation communications and community services.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is an important milestone in the economic development of our province that a commission such as is envisaged in this motion should be set up. I would like to remind hon. members that in 1913, a royal commission was set up in this province. That royal commission had on it some very prominent men who played an important part in the development of Saskatchewan. There was the hon. George Langley, who was at that time Minister of Municipal Affairs; there was John Herbert Haslam; there was Charles Avery Dunning, and there was Professor Edmund Henry Oliver of the University of Saskatchewan. Those members who have had an opportunity of reading that report will, I am sure, be impressed with the careful research work which was done, with the broad scope of the enquiry and with the valuable information that was made available to provincial and municipal governments and to whomever was interested in the agricultural industry of Saskatchewan. That report is a very fine document, and while I will be making some reference to it later on, I shall not quote from it extensively, but I do recommend it to the study of hon. members who are interested in the history of agricultural in Saskatchewan.

That report was a good report. It set the sociological pattern to a very great extent for the development in Saskatchewan for the 25 years following that period of time. As all hon. members know, a great many changes have taken place in the 39 years since that Commission sat, and since it made its report. The Government feels that in view of those changes, it is now incumbent upon us to set up a royal commission to make an investigation along the lines that are contained in this motion.

The motion itself outlines some of the changes that have taken place in the past 30 years, and sets out the reason we are recommending the setting up of the Royal Commission. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the Industrial Revolution which struck industry in the beginning of the 19th century, struck agriculture in the early part of the 20th century. Mechanization of agriculture has characterized the whole farming industry during the past quarter of a century. Now, an Industrial Revolution, whether it comes to industry or to agriculture, brings about great benefits, but it also creates certain problems. The Industrial Revolution which came to industry 150 years ago brought with it increased production, higher standards of living and some of the amenities of life, but the Industrial Revolution for industry also brought with it crowded cities, slums, sweat-shop conditions, labour problems, a growth of monopolies and a great many other problems in its wake.

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Now, because an industrial revolution brings about problems is no reason to decry those changes, but those changes must be faced intelligently. Since the art of governing is the art of foreseeing, it is necessary for us to recognize that technological changes in agriculture, which, as I shall show in a few moments, have brought great benefits to those engaged in the agricultural industry, have also created a great many problems.

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The introduction of machinery into farming operations have made it possible for a man with machinery to farm a great deal more land than he could farm before. Not only has it made it possible to farm more land, but in some cases has made it necessary to farm more land. I was having supper on a farm a few weeks ago — a farm that was operated by a young man trained in agriculture. He had a very well-equipped farm, a modern line of up-to-date machinery, the farm electrified, his own welding equipment, and his own little workshop, and I said to him: "You certainly have an excellent farm here, equipped with everything that one would desire." He said, "Yes, I have, but I am only farming a section of land. I have got to get another section of land, if I am going to maintain the tremendous overhead which I am carrying. With the line of equipment I have I will go broke, gradually, farming only one section of land I will have to get another section, in order to break even."

Mr. Speaker, that is indicative of the trend that increased cost of farm implements, increased mechanization of farming, has not only made it possible, but it has in some cases made it absolutely necessary, if the farmer is to meet the capital overhead which he has, to expand his farm unit.

We have some interesting figures collected by my department, which showed that the machinery necessary today, to operate, for instance, a half-section farm, costs a minimum of \$6,733. For a section farm, \$8,320; and for a 2,000 acre farm — \$16,586. With a capital over-head like that, the farmer is being compelled more and more to increase his farm unit. That means, of course, that with increased cost it becomes more and more difficult for a young man to enter the agricultural industry. Thirty years ago a man could start up farming with four horses and a plow, and a few other pieces of machinery. Today he requires a very considerable capital investment before he can think of going into farming operations.

Now, these larger farm units that have come as a result of the mechanization of agriculture, have had one result that is apparent to everyone, and that is the depopulation in our rural areas. That has been going on for quite a while. It is interesting to note that from 1936 to 1941, 50,428 left the rural areas. 14,873 of those were absorbed into the towns and cities in the province, but we lost the rest. From 1941 to 1946, 84,918 people left the rural areas; 21,614 of those were absorbed into the towns and cities — the rest left the province. From 1946 to 1951, about an equal number, 83,170 left the rural areas. Fortunately, 82,210 moved into towns and cities of our province, so that we had a net loss of only 960. The feature that should give us all concern is that the number of people leaving a rural area is still about the same. However, our towns are growing. I noticed the last census showed that we have 420 towns and

villages, and out of this number 312 of them showed a decided increase in population. This trend away from the rural areas into the towns is, of course, not confined to Saskatchewan. It is rather interesting to look at the 1941 census and see that in 1941 the rural population of Manitoba was 67 per cent, of their total population. In Saskatchewan the rural population was 67 per cent, and in Alberta it was 61 per cent. What is the situation today? Today in Manitoba, the rural population is only 40 per cent. Only two-fifths of the people in Manitoba live on farms. In Alberta the rural population is only 45 per cent. Less than half the people in Alberta live on farms. In Saskatchewan the rural population is 52 per cent. Nearly half the people of Saskatchewan live in towns, villages or cities.

While rural depopulation has hit Saskatchewan as a result of the mechanization of agriculture, it has struck our neighbouring provinces to an even greater extent. A great many problems are created as your people move into the towns and villages. In some cases farming is done from the towns and villages. Rural areas find themselves with insufficient people to support the schools, the rural telephone companies, the local hospitals and the other services of that community. It creates a great many social problems of various sizes, because you have growing up the whole problem of absentee landlordism.

Mr. Speaker, when I talk about this rural depopulation, of course no one should get the impression that this means we are producing less wealth on the farms. As I pointed out on previous occasions, what is actually happening is that, today with less people on the farms, we are farming more land and producing more wealth. If we take, for instance, the gross value of crops, we find that they have steadily increased. If we take the physical volume, that has also increased. If we take the amount of production per individual, that too has increased very considerably. In 1911 the average value field crop produced per person working on the farm (not the women or children, but the person, male adults working on the farm in the production of field crops) was \$601. In 1921 it rose up to \$1,236; in 1931 with crop failure and low prices, it dropped to \$344; in 1941 it came up again to \$727, and in 1946 it came up to \$1,868. If you look at the gross value of production for the last four or five years, they have exceeded all previous records.

We should not get the impression that because there are less people on farms, our economy is shrivelling up and dying. That would be an entirely erroneous impression. We are today farming more land. We are today producing more wealth. Therefore, we ought not to cry blue ruin. We ought not to talk, as some people do about going back to the quarter-section farm, or going back to horses. You can no more go back to horses than you can go back to the hand-sickle. Mechanization is here to stay: Mechanization has brought many benefits in its wake. It has made possible increased production; it has made it possible to produce more wealth per capita; it has given greater leisure to those on farms and it has made possible a higher standard of living for the rural communities. We cannot go back. We must face the benefits that have been derived from mechanization of agriculture. At the same time that we are recognizing the benefits, we must recognize that the economic benefits have brought in their trail certain social problems. Those problems have to be faced up to, and that is why that we think this Royal Commission ought to study

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this problem and to lay out a blue-print that would serve the same purpose that the 1913 Commission served, in helping provincial governments, municipal governments, farm organizations and rural communities, to plan our economic and social life for the next quarter of a century on the basis of some sound research and some reliable information.

For instance, we want to know what is the economic farm unit? It is apparent that in grain-growing areas, a quarter-section is no longer a farm unit that is economical and that a quarter-section in a grain-growing area will not support the costly equipment that is necessary. I am not speaking now of dairying nor of mixed farm communities, but certainly in grain farming areas, the tendency is towards larger economic units. But what is the economic unit? Is it half-section, is it one section, is it two sections? We have to know what constitutes a sound farm economy. We have to know something about better land utilization. We have to look at crop insurance as a means of putting some stability into agriculture, in the same manner that unemployment insurance helps to put some stability into industry. We need to know what is to be the sociological pattern in the future, because if we do not plan for a sociological pattern, we are liable to get a haphazard one.

Some years ago it was my privilege to do part of a survey in rural areas in the state of Illinois, when I was working for my degree at Chicago University. We made a study there of rural areas which had become almost completely denuded, where corporation farms had grown up, and where comrades had come into possession of land which farmers had given up because they could not meet their obligations. Great areas of that part of Illinois were being farmed by mortgage companies, and loan companies who sent our crews with bunk-houses and equipment to put in the crop, and came out in the fall and took the crop off. The result was that little towns and villages had virtually disappeared and all that was left was a filling station and a lunch counter. Schools were closed, telephone lines were useless, and most of the rural services had completely disappeared.

Corporation farms, in my humble opinion, would completely destroy the economy of this province, and would destroy the economy of any other economic unit. But what are we to have? Is there a place for co-operative farms in meeting this problem of rural depopulation, and in keeping people on farms? Is the co-operative use of farm machinery a means by which small farmers who cannot get more land can still farm their land more economically, and have all the benefits of expensive machinery, and yet not go broke because the farm unit is not large enough? We think that should be investigated. Are we going to move to some extent, into the European pattern, where people, as hon. members know, live often times in villages and farm out from those villages? Are we to move in a direction of planting our community life so that increasingly farm homes will be built along highways and main market roads, so that they can be served by power, and by good roads, and by good telephone lines, and bus routes and so on.

Those are the things about which we want information. Those are the kind of things we think the Royal Commission, as suggested in this motion, should be able to enquire into and report on. We want to know, for instance, are the credit facilities that are now available to the farming communities adequate? We have the banks; we have lending institutions; we have the Canadian Farm Loan Board; are those credit facilities adequate, and are they serving the needs of the rural community? If they are not, are there better facilities that could be devised? As hon. members know, as I said previously, legislation is being brought in at this Session to set up a Co-operative Trust Company, and legislation is now on the Order Paper by which the Provincial Government will guarantee certain borrowings of that trust Company. One of the purposes of that Act will be to enable people in the co-operative movement who are on farms to borrow money to go into farming operations, or to expend their operations. Well, will that serve the credit needs of the rural area, or will something further have to be done?

It is very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that in this agricultural credit commission set up in 1913 in which Mr. Langley, and Mr. Dunning served, along with Mr. Oliver and Mr. Haslam, that one of the things they recommended very strongly was the setting up of a Saskatchewan Co-operative Mortgage Association. They had several pages of recommendations as to how a Co-operative Farm Mortgage Association would operate, with the Provincial Government setting it up, and the farmers operating and running it. I do not know whether any action was ever taken on that recommendation, but I do not think any such recommendation was acted upon. That question should certainly be looked into now, and we would be glad to get recommendations on that subject.

This commission should look at the full matter of diversification of agriculture. Is greater diversification possible? Are we concentrating too much of our agricultural production in terms of grain? What are the factors that keep farmers from producing livestock and going into more diversified agriculture? Are there any ways in which Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments could encourage increased diversification, rather than tending as we are now, to a one-crop economy?

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the problems that we think should be studied. They should be studied by capable people with a background in agriculture, or with some training in agriculture. We think that if that job is well done by this Commission, and if their recommendations commend themselves to the Government of the day, and to the legislature of this province, that that report and its recommendations could constitute a blue-print for the agricultural industry in Saskatchewan over the next quarter of a century.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot do better in summing up what I have to say than to quote from two editorials, which put the case much better than I could do. Those two editorials appear in the Western Producer, and the first is dated February 21, 1952, and says in part this:

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"That there is a fruitful field of enquiry, for such a Commission there is no doubt. Agriculture on the prairies at this time is passing through a period of transition. For one thing, the pioneer stage has definitely passed; comparatively little virgin land remains open for settlement; the boundaries of the farming regions are fairly well set, and the facts concerning soil, climatic and tillage conditions have been pretty well explored. There is, of course, never an end to learning, but the broad, general pattern of prairie agriculture has been established for the present, at least. The time, therefore, would seem to be opportune for taking stock.

"There are too, the fundamental adjustments that have been occasioned by the revolutionary development in farm machinery during the last decade or more. This involves not only the matter of equitable cost of equipment, but also the scale of investment needed to set up farming along modern lines. This aspect to the question is to be specifically dealt with by a Committee of the Legislature.

"The most profitable field of enquiry for the proposed Royal Commission, is we think what Mr. Nollet calls, the 'problem of maintaining the family farm', and 'modern amenities for the farm homes and municipal services.' The test of a prosperous agriculture is a degree of prosperity which can be maintained on the family farm. The Commission might be charged with determining what, under varying conditions, should constitute the family farm, and under what circumstances it can be maintained as a growing concern.

"The question of amenities is both timely and important. In recent years there has been a wide-spread tendency for farmers to move off the land and to establish residence in towns and cities. Is this desirable? Are there advantages in the drift toward urban centres? Would it be better to establish permanent residence right on the land? If so, are there available for the farm home at reasonable costs, amenities comparable to those normally enjoyed in town? Can side roads be kept open during the winter, thus at least partially conquering isolation? To what extent, and how rapidly can electricity and perhaps gas, be made accessible to the rural population? These are questions on which there is a lot of rather vague information, but to which specific answers have not yet been given. In them, and in related matters, the Royal Commission might find an extremely fruitful field of exploration."

And then in a more recent editorial, appearing in *The Western Producer* on March 13, the editor has this to say:

"The Royal Commission the Saskatchewan Government proposes to set up to study agricultural trends in the province, should be able to gather information and make recommendations which, acted upon, could establish rural life on a more permanent and satisfactory basis for the future.

"There can be little doubt of the need for an objective look at the whole agricultural picture at this time, not only Government officials, municipalities and economists, but every thinking farm man and woman should be deeply concerned with the consequences of the increasingly rapid drift away from the diversified farming, and back into a one-crop economy.

"From the short-term point of view, what is happening in agriculture appears to be a logical and perhaps inevitable development. Dry-land farming means large acreages — large acreages in turn means a scattered population and isolation for the farmer and his family, particularly in the winter-time.

"Power machinery and the motor car have made it possible for more and more rural people to become absentee farmers, if they get rid of their livestock and confine their farm operations to growing grain crops. As a result, many farmers in recent years have moved their families into nearby villages and towns, or in some instances, to more distant cities where they can enjoy the supposedly superior educational and social services of urban living. The first year of the move, the farmer probably returns alone to the farm to put in the crop in the spring; the family moved out when school is over at the end of June. The next year the problem of moving looked greater, no doubt, and the family stayed in town. In Saskatchewan where the farm buildings are abandoned, and the only sign of life on the farm is a truck and a trailer, which is all that is required by way of accommodation while spring seeding and fall harvesting is under way. No one blames the farmer for wanting to give his family all the advantages he can, but the problem of absentee farming is one that in time will have a serious impact on the whole agricultural economy.

"If the trend persists, the inevitable end must be, not only denudization of the soil, but depopulation of the countryside, and destruction of the rural community.

"How build and keep up roads on power lines, rural hospitals, or schools in an abandoned countryside? It is a social as much as it is an economic problem. For that reason, we think that the government would be well-advised when appointing its Commission to name a farm woman as one of its members. In its enquiry the Commission will undoubtedly

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investigate the possibility of bringing to rural communities modern conveniences and social benefits, which most farm people today seem to believe can only be secured only in urban centres.

"In that investigation, the viewpoint of a rural woman on the Commission would be invaluable since it is farm women who have suffered most keenly from the isolation of the farm, and whose demands for better educational and social opportunities for their children have done much to establish the present trend from the farms."

Mr. Speaker, I think those two editorials written by the editor of the Western Producer sum up the case for this Royal Commission far better than any words of mine could do. I want simply to reiterate that, in this great period of transition, brought about by technological changes in agriculture (we are not decrying these changes — they have brought great benefits), certain problems have been created, particularly social problems. Our people are better off, but we can see that in the future some of the trends could lead to very serious social consequences.

We think that since "to govern is to foresee" that we must now apply ourselves to this problem, and in order to apply ourselves to the problem, we need all the information that can be gathered. It should be gathered by trained, intelligent and interested people who, in turn, can make recommendations to the government, to the municipalities, and to farm organizations as to how best to meet and solve the problem that have been created in the technological changes in the agricultural economy.

Therefore, I make the above-mentioned motion, seconded by Hon. Mr. Nollet, Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. I.C. Nollet (Minister of Agriculture): — Mr. Speaker, I do not know of any resolution that could come before this Legislature that I would more heartily support than this particular resolution. It certainly does, I believe, mark a new era in rural development in Saskatchewan. I note particularly, Mr. Speaker, that the resolution deals with the entire problem. It takes into consideration the problem of rural planning from the point of view of social services, communications, and at the same time it relates that planning to good sound farm practice, and good land use practice. In other words, it is proposed that this Commission will deal with the entire problem, and treat the problem as a whole, something which we have not been doing in the past.

It is true that we have endeavoured to correct some of the natural hazards of nature that afflict Saskatchewan agriculture more so than any other province in the Dominion of Canada. We have made some progress in that direction; in fact in recent years we have made very substantial progress,

but our study and experience to date reveals the need for an overall enquiry into the entire rural problem. I therefore welcome this resolution, and welcome the fact that a Royal Commission will be set up.

It has often been said, Mr. Speaker, that the recommendations of Royal Commissions are not implemented. Generally speaking, when we have had Royal Commissions enquire into agriculture, the recommendations of those Commissions have been implemented, and I think I can say for the Government that the recommendations of this Royal Commission will be implemented. It has always been my thinking, Mr. Speaker, that we have to first of all build a sound agricultural economy in Saskatchewan if we are going to have any stability in industry, in social services, and the economy as a whole. The need for a sound agriculture in this province, as I have mentioned, is more important in Saskatchewan than in any other province in the Dominion of Canada, because we are beset with natural hazards here which other provinces do not experience. Our record in that regard is outstanding. Our record in the expenditures of public money for relief is particularly outstanding, Mr. Speaker. A good deal of that circumstance came about as a result of natural factors — the immutable laws of nature — which caused depopulation in certain rural areas, and aggravated by the unplanned settlement, which took place in the early days. We cannot blame the governments for that; they did not have the long-term production records, they did not have the long-term production records, they did not have long-term precipitation records, and above all else, we had no knowledge of soil in this province at that time.

However, we did have the benefit of warnings issued by such men as Palliser, who at an early date stated that what is known as the "Palliser Triangle" would never be suitable for cultivation. We ignored those warnings, though, and the settlers came in by the hundreds, and later by the thousands, only to leave certain areas of our province again, due, as I said, to the fact that these early settlers were endeavouring to farm in contradiction to the laws of old Mother Nature, herself, and Old Mother Nature is a stern ruler. We may be able to fool her for a year or two, but in the long-run old Mother Nature has her way.

I would like, Mr. Speaker, to refer back historically to the early settlement days in order to point out to hon. members that in the first instance, it was natural factors that created shifts in rural population but now, as the Premier has pointed out, we face certain economic factors that we have to reckon with as well. I would like to go over this, and review what has taken place in the past, because there is a good deal of talk now about depopulation. It is something that is not new to Saskatchewan. It is something that has been with us for many years. As the Premier has as pointed out, there were several enquiries made into rural problems previously by Royal Commissions, but as a rule they only investigated one phase of agriculture. In 1913 it had been pointed out that a commission was set up to study rural credit. I do not know what became of it, but I do know that as a result of extensive loaning and borrowing to the farmers of Saskatchewan, with no relation between that borrowing and good land use practices, the farmers of

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this province got themselves involved into hundreds of millions of dollars in indebtedness, and on top of that, the burden of relief.

A Commission was also set up in 1915 to investigate the sale of farm implements. That Commission made certain recommendations in regard to that phase of that agriculture, and now, 37 years later, we are having another investigation into the price, sale and distribution of farm implements. But to go back again to the early settlement days, it is often mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that the years 1915 and 1916 were probably the years that did more towards inaugurating unstable agriculture in this province than any other two-year period of time in the history of Saskatchewan. Those were the two years when we had bumper crops, and I can still remember as a young man when I was on the other side of the border, quite a few of our neighbours were leaving to go to Saskatchewan to grow wheat. Why, they said, all you need to do is tickle the ground a little with a plow, and you will get 40 bushels of grain, and many people expected that that circumstance would continue. But old Mother Nature, as is her want, stepped in very quickly, and we had three crop failures in 1917, 1918 and 1919. As a result of that experience, a Royal Commission was set up to enquire into farming conditions. It was called the Good Farming Commission. It arose as a result of a meeting held in Swift Current, where representatives from organizations surveyed the whole field of agriculture in southwest Saskatchewan, that is in an area extending from Radville north-westerly to the Saskatchewan River, just about at Elbow, and then turning west again to the Alberta boundary.

This Commission was set up to study the problems in that particular area that is usually referred to as the 'problem area of Saskatchewan.' Now, some of the observations in regard to that Commission are quite interesting. The reasons for the investigation are interesting, and it states that throughout the dry years there were some who were able to mow some crop year after year, and this fact encouraged people to hope that the investigators might find crops better suited to south-western Saskatchewan than those commonly grown, and a system of farm management, which would make the farms less liable to crop failure, and the farmers more able to withstand the effect of the drought season.

Early on they began to get some opinions in regard to land use practices. Now, the other thing that interests me is this, and I quote:

"The need for some closer study of agricultural methods in the Province of Saskatchewan, and with particular reference to the western and southwestern portions, has been manifest during the past three years."

They had three years of drought at that time.

"It is an impression of long standing that the western and southwestern portions of Saskatchewan were not so favourably situated for the growing of crops as some other sections of the Province."

And they repeat what I said at the outset:

"The years 1915 and 1916 had the tendency to dissipate that impression, but with the recurrence of dryer seasons in 1917-18-19, it has become evident the system of farming, which has proven successful for two years, cannot be successful continuously."

I note another most interesting observation contained in this same report, and it is associated to some extent to the discussions taking place in the legislature, even today, Mr. Speaker.

We have had quite a bit said about leases, grazing leases and cultivation leases on crown lands. I am going to read a few extracts from this Report. This one in particular:

"A deed of land is not used to any considerable extent for ranching purposes, as the opinion seems to be generally held that municipal and school taxation is too high, and interest charges on land prices too great to permit of the profitable use of such land for extensive grazing of livestock."

(Even in 1920 they thought prices were too high on certain classes of land).

"Whether this be true or not, it was apparent there was a serious difference in the cost of grazing land. Deeded land used for this purpose is valued at let us say, \$15 per acre, entails an annual overhead of \$1.20 per acre for interest. Such land will probably be taxed \$30 to \$35 per quarter-section for municipal school and public revenue support; or about 200 per acre — a total of \$1.40 per acre per annum; exclusive of special leases or levies for telephones, hospitals, or other purposes.

"School lands are rented at 10 cents per acre; taxes would make an additional cost of 3 cents per acre, making a total of 13 cents per acre for school grazing land. The leased land (that is, Crown land) costs 4 cents per acre, and an average of 3 cents per acre or a total of 7 cents per acre per annum.

"Users of forest reserves pay per animal, and not per acre."

Summarizing the foregoing, it gives the following comparative figures; for deeded land as against grazing land:

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Cost of deeded land — \$1.40 per acre per annum
Cost of school land — \$0.13 per acre per annum
Cost of leased land — \$0.07 per acre per annum

Comparing that with a cost of similar land, alienated land, privately owned, the cost would be (and this is allowing 20 acres per animal for grazing), the annual cost would be:

On deeded land — \$28.00 per animal
On school land — 2.60 per animal
On Crown leased land — 1.40 per animal
On Forest Reserves — 1.50 per animal (Maximum)

That is why I said in the House here the other day, Mr. Speaker, that I would be very glad to have the Government buy my grazing deeded land, and I would be glad to rent it back as a crown base for that purpose. It is not economic to raise livestock, graze livestock, on land that has a comparatively low carrying capacity for grazing purposes, and be able to carry the burden of the capital investment and the taxes against it.

Now I just made that brief reference to indicate again, Mr. Speaker, that even back in 1920 this Commission recommended that we utilize Crown Lands as far as possible to assist people in stabilizing their farm production units. They also recommended the establishment of community pastures. We did not get very far between 1920 and 1930 when the dirty 'thirties struck, and as a result we accumulated an enormous burden of relief obligations. But since then we have been making fairly good progress in the establishment not only of community pastures, but the community establishment of fodder reserves, and that sort of thing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few more references to people who have made a study of shifting population, but before doing so I would like to mention this. That some of the concrete results that came from the Commission enquiry of 1920 were the establishment of the experimental farm at Swift Current, and the experimental farm at Swift Current has been of tremendous benefit not only to the farmers in the southwest of the Province, but to the entire economy of the province. But of greater significance was a recommendation that we initiate soil and water survey. Those surveys, as everyone knows, were undertaken by Dr. Mitchell jointly by the Provincial and Dominion Government, and before any concrete programme could be developed for the maintenance of a sound agriculture in this province, it was necessary to have a soil survey worked out. Those soil surveys are now complete for the entire settled part of the Province and the soil services are now beginning to make their soil surveys north of the settled area of the province.

But that was the key that we required to inaugurate a good land use programme for this province, and I believe some day that great tribute will be paid to Dr. Mitchell at the University of Saskatchewan, who worked in co-operation with the Dominion Soil Services. I do not know a single agriculturist in this Province that has contributed more to agriculture than has Dr. Mitchell, and those that are associated with him. Now, I would like to refer to a survey also made by Professor C.C. Spence, and E.C. Hope. This survey was made in 1941 and again it was made in an area of the Province where crop failures were the rule rather than the exception,

and it covered pretty much a similar area to the one covered by the 1921 Commission. In order to hurry along — it is my understanding we are sharing radio time today with hon. members opposite, and I will try to conclude my remarks just as quickly as I possibly can.

Professor Hope in his report of 1941 refers to settlement and population, and again refers to that natural factor, the laws of nature. He reviews the growth and the contraction of population in the area in which he made the study, and the information contained in this pamphlet reveals this: The early settlers came in, took up homesteads, they were able to remain for a time as long as there was sufficient natural vegetation on which to grow their work animals and their other livestock, but over-grazing took place, and when vacant land was not available to their work animals and livestock, and as a result of successive crop failures, they had neither good grazing land left, and with no financial reserves they were compelled to leave either to better areas of the Province, or to find employment in industry.

He mentions here that the first census 1901 recorded approximately 1,700 people resident in the whole area that he made the study in. Again it was an area extending from Radville westward to Val Marie, and then North to the Saskatchewan River. There were only 1,700 people resident in that whole area in 1901. From 1901 to 1906 there was a fairly rapid increase in population and then during the following 10 years to 1916, a very rapid increase in population took place throughout the whole area, particularly in the central part. Growth in population was marked for the period of 1916 to 1926, but it took place more slowly from 1926 to 1930 and then in 1930 the population began to drop, and it has been dropping ever since in that particular area.

Now he refers to reasons for the decrease in population, and I say this, Mr. Speaker, because there has been a lot of hocus-pocus talk about rural depopulation in this Province of ours. It has been blamed on everyone, unfortunately some have tried to blame this government. Well, we could equally blame the previous administration, but that is something that we do not do, because there were factors involved beyond their control. I am talking about natural factors now. The greatest early decrease in population occurred in the R.M. of Brokenshell where the maximum was reached in 1911. The greatest further decline was in the R.M. of Chaplin where the population in 1936 was almost 30 per cent less than in 1916. As a matter of fact, the hon. members get a little laugh out of that, but they do not want to forget that they appointed a Commission in 1920 to study these matters. They did so little that we got buried in drought and depression in 1930. They did not even wake up then. We had to get a C.C.F. Government in 1944 before anything tangible was done by the Provincial Government, Mr. Speaker. Both of these municipalities comprised areas of poor land and the movement of the population is due in a large measure to the abandonment of this land, abandonment accounts in part for the decrease in population for many of the municipalities in the area classified. And then he says 'the decrease in population is not entirely due to the abandonment of the poorer land. Population has declined to a lesser extent on better land because of the enlargement of individual holdings, a process encouraged by the prevailing type of farming, and the number of successively favourable crop years in 1929.'

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And he mentions, too, 'that the tendency to larger unit was accelerated as a result of mechanization and the capital investment in farm equipment.'

Now, I just made that reference, Mr. Speaker, to indicate quite clearly in the first instance natural laws caused the shifts in population and depopulation of certain parts of our province that did not have the carrying capacity to sustain a dense population. And that goes for the greater part of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

A further study was made in sixteen selected municipalities; in 1946 a land use study was made comprising these municipalities, in order to determine a sound agricultural policy, not only for that area, but for the entire Province of Saskatchewan and the personnel of this land use committee were Dr. L.B. Thompson, presently the director of P.F.R.A., Mr. L.M. Ogilvie, district supervisor for the Agricultural Representative Service at Swift Current, J.D. Campbell of the Dominion Experimental Station, and G.M. Munro, of the Provincial Water Rights Branch, H. Van Vleit, Department of Farm Management, University of Saskatchewan and Herb Weib, representing the Stock Growers from Herbert, Saskatchewan.

Now, I am not going to go into this land use report to any extent. I am only going to deal with the general recommendations made by this land use committee. And I might say, Mr. Speaker, that this land use report has been made available to every member of this legislature, and it is a report well worth reading by anyone. And we have used this report, and the general outlines contained in this report for further land use studies made at the local level by municipal agricultural committees.

The general recommendations are as follows:

A Future Land Use Programme

"It is felt by the Committee that problems of land use will become of increasing importance as time passes and whereas many areas of the province have serious land use problems at the present time, the committee recommends that a central land use committee be formed to guide the land use programme for the whole of the Province of Saskatchewan, and a sub-committee be formed by it from time to time to conduct land use studies in specific areas."

Even before this committee reported, we implemented that recommendation, Mr. Speaker. We organized what is known as the Co-operative extension programme. That is a co-operative programme between the agricultural representative service, the University and the Experimental Farm Service of this Province, and we have inaugurated these land use studies in many R.M.'s. I am glad to report to this Assembly that there have been over a hundred land use studies completed in the various municipalities who undertook those types of studies. In addition to that, there are still in the process of completion, some additional, sixty land use studies being made at the present, and some of the work in connection with these studies now is being analyzed with the actual field work completed. The report continues — financial personnel:

"Whereas the Committee feels that it is sound practice to develop an overall land use programme, and whereas greater numbers of trained personnel will be required in such a programme, the Committee recommends that consideration be given to the financing of such a programme and provision be made to obtain the necessary personnel and services."

We have done that. We have doubled the Agricultural Representative Service, we have taken on specialized staff, not only in the plant industries Branch, but we have for the first time engineers and farm mechanics in the Conservation and Development Branch and Irrigation engineers — something that we never had before. We have got a working organization, Mr. Speaker, that has an appropriation of over a million dollars to one branch alone. So we are making progress.

Another recommendation was the co-ordination of service. I mentioned this previously. Services are now completely co-ordinated and integrated with the Dominion and University services. The report mentions another recommendation "Guidance for land use planning." Well, in that regard we have been guided by the experiences or the experimental work done by the various experimental stations, and we have been guided by the recommendations of this particular committee. I mention these facts, Mr. Speaker, to indicate to any of those who might criticize the setting up of a Royal Commission as being a way of dodging a problem. I am saying this to point out that we have been doing things about the basic agricultural problems of Saskatchewan. As I stated at the outset our information reveals that it is not sufficient and enough to just deal with the production problems of Agriculture. We are not accomplishing the full purpose if we just establish a sound production programme alone, and we realize that some of the deterrents to enabling farmers to get the full benefits and amenities of modern living, and at the same time carry on good land use practices, means rural settlement.

Planning this whole question of rural planning is to the forefront today. As the Premier has stated, we want to make it possible for people to get the benefits of electrification, and to get other services just as cheaply as they can and as economically as they can, and this is the problem as far as Saskatchewan is concerned, as I have mentioned, with a sparse population, a good portion of it with a low human carrying capacity, and a low animal carrying capacity, and also a low carrying capacity for the production of cereal grain crops as well.

So our problems, regarding rural services, are much more difficult than that of any other province. And because of those factors, and because of the experiences that we have had to date in dealing with the agricultural phase of the problem I have always felt, and the people in my Department have felt, the need of dealing with this problem as a whole. Therefore, I am happy, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to have a Royal Commission that will provide an opportunity for all agencies concerned to make representations to the municipal people, especially with whom we have been working closely through local agricultural committees, and I might add, we have

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agricultural committees in every L.I.D. and municipality in this province. We have positive programmes too that are effective in discharging the agricultural policies that have been determined at the local level as a result of the studies made by these local committees.

I would, if I had time, like to have referred to some of these land use surveys and the projects resulting therefrom, at the local level. Information is revealed much the same as this land use report associated with the 16 rural municipalities where the special study was done, and much the same kind of information that we got out of the Royal Commission — that is the better farming Commission of 1920. The only difference being when the present municipal committees complete their land use studies and then decide on certain programmes the Department is right in there with assistance policies to help them. If they decide on a Community pasture, a small one, and they can handle it themselves, the Department pays 50 per cent of the development cost. If it is a feed project on a small scale, we do similarly, Mr. Speaker. If it is too large for a municipality to handle, the Conservation and Development Branch comes in and assumes the entire development cost, and then turns the project over to the local authorities for administration. We have therefore been doing something about farm problems, Mr. Speaker, but as I stated, we also have economic factors and it is necessary to overcome many of the economic factors that stand in the way. In particular, the one the Premier has mentioned posed as a result of mechanization which, on the one hand, is a boon to agriculture, but on the other hand has created problems. It has certainly provided people the opportunity of living in town, but I want to say that unless we can live in communities and at the same time carry on good sound land use practices, implying a balanced type of agriculture, the problem of soil fertility will be worse, and eventually, Mr. Speaker, on at least, 26 million acres of our cultivation land we will be farming ourselves out of business, if we fail to inaugurate a type of settlement that will make possible grass rotation with livestock playing a more prominent part in future farm practice.

I see the hon. member for Arm River (Mr. Danielson) as usual, snickering in his hand. He is one of those members, Mr. Speaker, who does not like the extension of Agricultural representative services, or any other specialized services. The same with the hon. member for Humboldt, Mr. Speaker, but here are the reports.

Mr. Danielson: — On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture has no business to attack any member who sits in his seat and smiles in this House. If he has nothing else to . . .

Hon. Mr. Nollet: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if I misinterpreted the hon. member's smile I am willing to take it back, but it looked . . .

Mr. Danielson: — I do not see anything there to smile at . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order! Order!

Hon. Mr. Nollet: — It looked a little unusual for me to see the hon. member smiling at any, time. Now, Mr. Speaker . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order! I am quite sure the Minister does not want to imply any individual criticism.

Hon. Mr. Nollet: — No, certainly I do not, Mr. Speaker, and if I made any implication, I will be glad to withdraw. I am glad anyway that the hon. member is smiling. He looks more pleasant now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Danielson: — What did you mention my name for then?

Hon. Mr. Nollet: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude because the hon. members opposite do want to have an opportunity on the air, I take it. I regret very much . . .

Mr. W.A. Tucker: — You could have been through half an hour ago.

Hon. Mr. Nollet: — Mr. Speaker, I think I endeavoured to cover the natural hazards we have to contend with. I have also indicated that we have economic problems to surmount, and I believe that as a result of studies made and the recommendations submitted by the proposed Royal Commission, we can inaugurate a policy that will treat the problem as a whole, and find the solution to the difficulties that are so pronounced in rural areas of Saskatchewan.

Mr. W.A. Tucker (Leader of the Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, the division of radio time that the Minister of Agriculture (Hon. Mr. Nollet) referred to that he was making with us, I see has worked out to about an hour and five minutes for the C.C.F., and 10 minutes, or not quite, for us, and he really should not have been surprised that my hon. friend from Arm River (Mr. Danielson) was rather surprised at that allocation of time.

Hon. T.C. Douglas (Premier): — Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege, if the Government side of the House has monopolized too much of the time, and I agree that we have, I suggest my hon. friend might speak until we go off the radio and adjourn the debate, and he can go on first thing Monday if he wants to. We will be quite agreeable to that.

Mr. Tucker: — Well, I appreciate what the hon. Premier has said. I am not really complaining. I refer to it more from the standpoint of what the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Hon. Mr. Nollet) said to my hon. friend from Arm River (Mr. Danielson). That, I think, was what was rather amusing him, that what was regarded by the C.C.F. as a fair division between the C.C.F. and Liberals was an hour and five minutes for the C.C.F. and 10 minutes for the Liberals, and you can hardly blame my hon. friend from Arm River for rather smiling at that allocation of time. It reminded me of the old story of the fellow in the army that found a great deal of horse meat in his stew and it was supposed to be rabbit stew (my friend from Swift Current (Mr. Gibbs) I guess, is familiar with this little story) — and he complained and they said it was a fifty-fifty stew, anyway. And he said, "How do you mean?" "Well," he said, "one horse and one rabbit." That is what the allocation implied.

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I do not want to postpone the setting up of this commission, or the passage of this business. It may be that my hon. friend from Arm River might want to speak on this matter, so perhaps we will take advantage of the offer of the Premier in regard to adjourning the debate. But I did not have in mind speaking long on the matter myself. Of course, perhaps like the Minister of Agriculture, once I get going I may say four times what I expected. That has happened before in my case, too.

The first thought that I had in regard to this matter was one of feeling that there were so many things that should have been done by this government to help the farmers of this country and to halt the movement from the farm to the towns and cities, and away from the farm to other provinces, that had not been done, that my feeling was that action would have been very much more in order that the setting up of a Royal Commission. But if we are not going to have the action until we get a change of Government, which I hope will not be too long delayed, there certainly is no harm in having some of these matters studied by a Royal Commission. It is quite conceivable, and I believe that it is true, that a Royal Commission can go into some fundamental problems that perhaps should be gone into.

I see in the resolution it is indicated that "the rapid increase of farm mechanization and the widespread adoption of new agriculture methods have resulted in basic changes in rural life, and the farm economy of Saskatchewan." I think there are other reasons as well as that for the changes in rural life and the trends away from the farm. I think one of the basic reasons for trends like this is very often to be found in economic changes, and with the improvement of the lot of labour and particularly of unionized labour in the towns and cities, in the way of cutting down hours of work, and the obtaining of holidays with pay, which has gone on all over Canada — in fact all over the western world — if the farmer has not been able to keep pace with those improved conditions which the worker in industry has come to enjoy, there is a tendency, naturally, for people who are thinking of having a happy life, or satisfactory life, who want a bit more pleasure out of life, for them to go where they have shorter hours of work and more leisure to enjoy life with their families. And I think that that probably has been one of the reasons for the trend away from the farms in Saskatchewan — that feeling of the farmer, especially if he was on a mixed farm, and was tied down every day in the week so that it was impossible for him to get a holiday, and he had to work much longer hours than if he got a job in the city.

That trend not only works against the retention of the people on the farm, and I think the rapid dwindling of farm population is a bad thing for any country. But it also has an adverse effect in regard to the people that dwell in the cities. Because if you turn our economy too completely into a grain economy and have people in too great a number who are on the farms turning away from the production of dairy products and meat products, you are going to create a situation where the urban dweller is going to begin to find his food products getting scarcer and scarcer, and higher and higher in price. So he is equally interested in this problem.

And this whole question of a fair division of national income between the people who are engaged in the most important of all — I think it is the most important of all occupation, that of farming, because without the production of food, human life could not be maintained at all — and this

examination as to what extent there is a fair apportionment of the national income between the people living on the farms and producing the food of the country, and those who are engaged in industry and other lines of work, — that is pretty fundamental. I have sometimes thought that in the interests of better understanding between the farmer and the person who earns his living by working for wages, it would be a good thing if that problem were examined by an absolutely impartial body, and it would end perhaps with some misunderstandings existing between the groups.

I am not one that for a single minute underrates the advantages which a person who is well established in farming has in the way of security and in a very satisfactory way of life. So far as I am concerned, I would never, if I had a choice between being a farmer and a person working for wages, and with a reasonable chance to provide the amenities of life for my family — I would never change my position as a farmer, if I were able to farm, to move into the city and have to rely on the uncertainties of earning my living by working for wages. So the farmer has that advantage. But, I think no harm will be done by looking into that aspect of things.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am just really started. I thought maybe I could say what I really wanted to say in the few minutes that are left, but I think that this is perhaps important enough a matter that I would like my hon. friend from Arm River to have a chance to speak on this, too. He is one of the oldest members of this House, and one of the best-known farmers in the province, and I would like him to have a chance to say a word on this. So, I think, Mr. Speaker, I will accept the suggestion of the Premier and move the adjournment of this debate.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:15 o'clock p.m.