

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Third Session — Seventeenth Legislature
11th Day

Thursday, February 8, 1973.

The Assembly met at 2:30 o'clock p.m.
On the Orders of the Day.

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

Hon. W.E. Smishek (Regina North East): — I should like to introduce to you and to the Members of the Legislature a group of 70 Grade Seven and Eight students from the Dr. George Ferguson School located in my constituency. They are seated in the Speaker's Gallery and are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Jordan and Mr. Edinal. I should like to extend to the students and to the teachers a warm welcome to this afternoon's Session and express the hope that their visit with us this afternoon will be informative, educational and that they have a pleasant stay with us.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. R. Romanow (Attorney General): — Mr. Speaker, it likewise gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you, Sir, and the Members of this Assembly a group of students from King George School in the city of Saskatoon. I believe they are in the west gallery, all showing the victory sign or the peace sign I suppose today. I don't know if many Members will know that King George School is one of the oldest and certainly finest schools in the city of Saskatoon. It, I believe, is the school of one of the greatest hockey players that the NHL has seen, Mr. Gordie Howe. I know that King George has always produced tremendous hockey players because they used to beat my school, Westmount, regularly. In any event I welcome the students, Mr. Christianson, I believe, accompanying them. I hope they have an informative time seeing democracy in action here in Regina. So I welcome them through you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ANNOUNCEMENT

ROBIN HOOD OATS MILL IN SASKATOON

Hon. K. Thorson (Minister of Industry): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day, I have an announcement I should like to make. Members may not have seen a story which appeared in last night's edition of the Leader-Post on page 28, amounting to about three or four column inches. The lead paragraph says:

Robin Hood Multifoods Ltd., has announced it will build a \$650,000 Oats Mill in Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Thorson: — Since last night, Mr. Speaker,

a member of our Department of Industry and Commerce has been in touch with Mr. H.L. Hingley, the Manager of the Robin Hood Mill in Saskatoon and I am happy to inform the House on the basis of the information he supplied that this investment may go as high as \$700,000 of which only \$20,000 will be for a building, the rest is for machinery which has been on order since last October. The company will proceed with this addition to its milling capacity in Saskatoon and eventually this will result in an addition of employment opportunities for 15 permanent personnel in Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. C.P. MacDonald (Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, I should just like to comment on the statement of the Minister of Industry (Mr. Thorson) and I want to say that we are delighted to see him stand up for the first time since he has been the Minister of Industry and make a comment about a new industry in this House. I should also like to say that I found it unusual that he had to read it in the paper. You know normally a Minister comes in here if the Government has had anything to do with it and reads it himself. I am sure that the people of Saskatoon are delighted that Robin Hood is going to expand its facilities in the Province of Saskatchewan. Another of those multi-national corporations that are contributing to work and employment in the Province of Saskatchewan.

QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON HIGHWAY TENDERING

Mr. J.G. Lane (Lumsden): — Before the Orders of the Day I should like to direct a question to the Hon. Minister of Highways (Mr. Kramer). What is the Government's policy with regard to preference bidding or Saskatchewan preferences on highway tendering?

Hon. E. Kramer (Minister of Highways): — Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that only in cases where the bidding was very close, and where the bidder had most of his plant or a great proportion of his plant in Manitoba or Alberta on the basis of a narrow percentage we would probably consider giving a Saskatchewan preference.

Mr. Lane: — A supplementary question to the Hon. Minister. Does that mean that any agreement between the three Prairie Provinces with regard to inter-provincial tendering is now at an end?

Mr. Kramer: — No, it does not and I think our Western Highways' Ministers conference to be held next week will discuss and firm up some of those things that have to do with liaison between the various provinces.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

Mr. A.R. Guy (Athabasca): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day, I should like to direct a question to the Provincial Secretary (Mr. Tchorzewski). I hope he realizes that 11 days of this

Session have gone by and we still have not received Returns for Nos. 1, 2, 8, 79 from almost a year ago. I think it is utter contempt of the House that we are expected to carry out our work when all these new planners and researchers can't even provide answers for a few Returns that were asked for last year. When can we expect them?

Hon. E.L. Tchorzewski: (Minister of Culture and Youth): — Mr. Speaker, I think that the Hon. Member is well aware that there have been a number of Returns tabled, 58, 59, 69 and many others. I can assure the Member that within a very short period of time within the next few days the other Returns will be forthcoming.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MOTION

PRIORITY OF DEBATE — UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. D.G. Steuart (Leader of the Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day I ask leave under Rule 17 to move a motion asking for a priority of debate for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance and I state the subject matter to be the jump from 5.5 per cent to 7 per cent in the month of January of the seasonably unadjusted unemployed rate for Saskatchewan, and the failure of the provincial Government to implement programs and policies to create employment in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

SPEAKER'S RULING

PRIORITY OF DEBATE — UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Speaker: — Well I may say that while I had a foreknowledge of this under Rule 17, these motions are very difficult to decide on because Rule 17 states:

The motion must not anticipate a matter which has been previously appointed for consideration by the Assembly or with reference to which a notice of motion has been previously given and not withdrawn.

Now Resolution No. 4 deals with Government policy or attempts to as does No.8, part of No. 11 and No. 12. Resolution No. 14 deals with the unemployment situation of Canada. Now this motion handed me now by the Opposition deals with three topics. It deals with unemployment, it deals with the Government program and it deals with Government policies. Standing Order No. 17(10)(b) states:

Not more than one matter can be discussed on the same motion.

I would say that while there is some anticipation in this, it deals with three topics, namely unemployment, Government policies and Government programs. I think standing Order No. 17 says that it must be definite and deal only with one point. While there will be other occasions to debate this as it is included

in some of the resolutions, therefore, at this time I will say under Rule 17 that I will have to rule this out of order.

Mr. Steuart: — Mr. Speaker, with deference, now you say it deals with three subjects. I must disagree with you. It deals with one subject — unemployment and the problem of the Government and what they are going to do about it. Now last year we had an emergency debate, for example, on the question of the blockage of the railroad and the failure of the railroads to move grain. Now that surely dealt with more than one subject by the ruling you just gave. It dealt with the inability of the railroad to move grain and it asked in there that we take action as a Legislature to urge the Federal Government to take action. Certainly there were at least two topics and we debated that. I recall other times in this House we have debated the situation concerning the sale of grain and part of the discussion had been not just the urgent situation that grain was not selling and the farmers were in difficulty but also the urging of the Federal Government to take some immediate action. I think under your ruling that would have been absolutely impossible. What would be the point in talking about unemployment if we don't say what we are going to do about unemployment. Now to begin with, there is no question that the rate of unemployment this January is the worst in years. The prediction of this Government was last fall . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order! We are not debating the motion, we are debating the ruling, that's all. We are not debating the pros and cons of the motion.

Mr. Steuart: — I am simply trying to point out that the basis, the whole basis, surely, of this kind of a debate is whether in fact there is an emergency. Now the question of whether there are other topics or related items to be brought up later in this Session may well be on the Order Paper. Surely that doesn't preclude the fact that we should be in a position, that's what this rule is there for, to give the Members of this Legislative Assembly the opportunity to debate something that is of an absolute emergency nature. Surely with thousands and thousands of jobless people and the rate climbing in this province, you are not going to tell me that your ruling will be that this is not an emergency and it's not emergent. We look through the Throne Speech, there was never a mention about unemployment. I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, why we need this debate, why it is an emergency.

Mr. Speaker: — No, I can't permit that.

Mr. Steuart: — Mr. Speaker, let me ask you this then — how did you allow one year ago a debate on the railroad situation which covered at least two topics and which this Legislature and this Government had no power to do anything about: Even with all the best will in the world we couldn't help because we don't have anything to do with railroads. I must say that this would be a subject about which this Government, our Legislative Assembly directing the Government can do something about it. It is within our jurisdiction. How can you say that this is not an emergency and should not be debated at this time when you allowed that same debate to take place a year ago?

Mr. A.R. Guy (Athabasca): — Mr. Speaker, further to the point of Order I should like to refer you to the Debates and Proceedings of last year or the Journals of last year. Request for priority of Debate was asked for by Mr. MacDonald from Milestone and this was the subject matter of that request which was granted by you, Mr. Speaker. It was, “The continuing Exodus of Established Industries from Saskatchewan”. That was one item that was involved. “Corresponding loss of jobs, wages and provincial revenue”, now there are three more items right there — jobs, wages and provincial revenue — “Which have been climaxed today by the confirmation that Smith-Roles of Saskatoon . . .”, there is another topic right there, “is moving to Alberta as a result of the provincial Government’s taxation policy”. Now we are not only talking about loss of industry, loss of jobs but we also get into the realm of taxation policy. Surely to goodness if that was in order last year the motion today which deals with unemployment has to be in order.

Hon. A.E. Blakeney (Premier): — May I comment on those points of order firstly with respect to the point raised by the Member for Athabasca (Mr. Guy), I am really quite ashamed of his performance. He has . . .

Mr. Guy: — You can be ashamed.

Mr. Blakeney: — He has the Journals before him, he quoted the Journals and he failed to quote the next line, “Mr. Speaker ruled that matter was not of urgent public importance under Rule 17.”

Mr. Speaker: — Order, Order!

Mr. Guy: — Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Order, if he will turn to page 114 which I asked him to, you will find and I will read I am ashamed of him and of his performance . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order! Will the Hon. Member from Athabasca let the Premier finish his comment because I can’t adjudicate on a cross-fire.

Mr. Guy: — He called me a liar.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. C.P. MacDonald (Milestone): — Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Order, Mr. Speaker, surely the question of this debate is, it is an emergency or it is not and that fact the Premier will not admit. He stood up in this House in the Throne speech, Sir, and said that the Province of Saskatchewan had 7,000 more people on the work force . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, please. We can’t debate what happened in the Throne Speech.

Mr. MacDonald: — All right, Mr. Speaker, I will not debate what happened in the Throne Speech. I clearly want to point out, Sir, that

there are 11,000 less people on the work force . .

Mr. Speaker: — We are not debating the statistics or anything else but what is before the House now is the Speaker's Ruling is on this Motion. That is all that is before the House not the subject matter of the debate.

Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Order. You have made a ruling. The simple alternative for the Opposition is whether they challenge your ruling or not. May I respectfully suggest that if they challenge it that they get up and challenge the ruling and have the House determine whether or not your ruling will be sustained. That is the procedure, Mr. Speaker, and I respectfully suggest that the Opposition stay to the rules of this House and stay to the rules of democracy.

Mr. Steuart: — Mr. Speaker, on that Point of Order, we don't need a lecture, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure you don't either on the proper procedure. We know we can disagree with the ruling of the Speaker and then put it to a vote. We have every right to do exactly what we are doing and point out to the Speaker, precedent and our opinion and don't you try to deny us that, Mr. Speaker, you know we have the right. For example, I am now going to read the motion that was made by the Premier about a year ago on which Mr. Speaker, allowed an emergency debate, and I am going to suggest to him for his consideration with due deference that this also covered, as does our motion I agree, more than one item because I just don't think you can talk about the movement of grain or unemployment without having more than one subject under discussion. Let me read.

The matter of the report that the interruption of the export of grain through the Pacific Coast Ports consequent upon inadequate rail routes (that's two questions, the holding up of the grain, inadequate rail routes); insufficient number of box cars (I suggest that is the third); insufficient handling of grain at the ports (four); resulting in a drastic reduction of exports (five); and possible loss of buyers (six) be given priority.

Mr. Speaker, with deference you allowed that. Surely that covers more than one subject. How can the Government say: we are not happy with the movement of grain, as they did then, they weren't happy neither were we. They suggested two or three things we would cover. I suggest you reconsider your ruling, Mr. Speaker, because this is an emergency and of course we have covered more than one subject, but by your very ruling a year ago you allowed the Government, the Premier, to have this similar type of debate and I suggest his motion covered more than one subject.

Mr. Speaker: — I would draw to the Hon. Member's attention that when I gave my ruling I pointed out what I thought were different reasons, under Section 10(d), it says the motion must not anticipate a matter which has been previously appointed for consideration by the Assembly, or with reference to which a Notice of Motion has been previously given and not withdrawn. That is if it has already been discussed or whether it was a

notice on the paper. I quoted four motions that are on the Order Paper where this topic can be partly dealt with. In order to strengthen that, I quoted also subsection (b) of Section 10, that not more than one matter can be discussed at the same time. I think the Hon. Leader of the Opposition will agree that when that motion he referred to was discussed last year it was on the second day of the sitting when no motions were on the Order Paper. So my ruling is, and it is available to be challenged, that at this time this is not an emergency motion.

Mr. Weatherald: — Mr. Speaker, on your ruling, I suggest to you at this time . .

Mr. Speaker: — I am not going to permit any more debate, you can either challenge my ruling, I have allowed some debate. Debate on the Speaker's ruling is not supposed to be permitted at all, but I allowed a debate on it.

Mr. Weatherald: — I'll be very brief, Mr. Speaker. I suggest that . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order! I cannot permit debate. I have ruled that it is not in order.

Mr. Steuart: — Mr. Speaker, let me say this, and I'll challenge your ruling. Let me say why I am challenging it, because I don't think it is your ruling, I think you got orders from the Premier and from the Attorney General . . this is an emergency. 7 per cent unemployment, is thousands and thousands of people walking the . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order!

Mr. Steuart: — . . they ought to be ashamed of themselves, and I challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: — The Speaker takes instructions from no one, he takes advice from the Clerk, but he takes instructions from no one.

The Speaker's ruling has been challenged.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: — Order, order! The Speaker's ruling has been challenged. The motion before the House is: Shall the Speaker's ruling be upheld.

Ruling of the Chair sustained on the following recorded division:

YEAS — 42

Blakeney
Dyck
Meakes

MacMurchy
Pepper
Michayluk

Matsalla
Faris
Cody

Wood
Smishek
Romanow
Messer
Snyder
Kramer
Thibault
Larson
Kowalchuk
Baker
Brockelbank

Byers
Thorson
Whelan
Kwasnica
Carlson
Engel
Owens
Robbins
Tchorzewski
Cowley
Taylor

Gross
Feduniak
Mostoway
Comer
Rolfes
Lange
Hanson
Oliver
Feschuk
Kaeding
Flasch

NAYS — 14

Steuart
Coupland
Loken
Guy
Grant

MacDonald (Milestone)
Gardner
Weatherald
MacLeod
McPherson

Lane
MacDonald (Moose Jaw N)
Wiebe
Richards

MOTIONS

RAIL LINE ABANDONMENT

Hon. A.E. Blakeney (Premier): — At the close of my remarks I intend to move seconded by the Hon. Member for Pelly (Mr. Larson) the resolution as it appears on the Order Paper dealing with the matter of rail line abandonment.

Some may feel that rail line abandonment is a tired old subject but let me warn this House and the people of Saskatchewan that it is very much alive. Nowhere will the railway companies' proposals for rail line abandonment across Canada have a greater impact than in Saskatchewan. Let me go back a bit in history. This whole business of rail line abandonment started with the MacPherson Commission in 1959, that was the Commission appointed by the Federal Government which brought down recommendations for the abandonment of branch lines, the recommendations coming down in 1961. That was the action of a Conservative Federal Government. It is just about 10 years ago that we in the Saskatchewan CCF who were the government at that time, were mounting the first fight against rail line abandonment. What we and the farm organizations won at that time was a partial victory, a stay of execution until 1975; a stay of execution for which Members opposite can take absolutely no credit. Although that doesn't stop them from seeking credit, and that is understandable since they have no other accomplishment to point to.

Mr. Romanow: — Obstructionism in this House that's all!

Mr. Blakeney: — But it was all started by a Conservative Federal Government. Then came the Transportation Act of 1967, which was enacted by a Liberal Government at Ottawa — it enshrined rail line abandonment in Legislation. Another Federal Liberal Government created the Canada Grains Council, and the Grains Group. The Grains Group was created by the Hon. Otto Lang,

whom we hear a great deal about in this House. We understand that the Grains Group will say once again that the country elevator system is outmoded and branch lines are too costly to operate. This may be partly true.

Let me make two points. Each of these steps from the MacPherson Commission to the Grains Council and the Grains Group today has been concerned with solving the problems of the railways and to some extent the elevator companies and not the problems of farmers, of small communities. This becomes crystal clear as you look at the successive recommendations and plans. That's point number one. They were focusing their attention on the problems of the railway companies and the elevator companies.

My second point is that what was started by the Conservatives is being finished off by the Liberals. The two old line parties have the same order of priorities, the problems of the railways and the line elevator companies are right up there at the top, and way down at the bottom are the problems of farmers. So when Federal Liberals and Federal Conservatives and Provincial Liberals tell you what great things they have done or plan to do for Western agriculture — and they are telling us a lot about those these days — remember rail line abandonment and elevator abandonment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — Let me remind you of just what happens when rail lines are abandoned. Let me tell you what will happen if the railways had their way. We have a total of 8,500 miles of railway in Saskatchewan. The railways have proposed to close down 3,000 miles of track, more than one-third of the total 8,500 miles. The elevator companies now operate about 2,700 elevators in the province. 800 would be slated for closure. Perhaps 375 delivery points would be affected. If we take all three prairie provinces we have proposals before us from the railway companies to abandon 5,500 miles of railway track in the three Prairie Provinces, 3,000 miles of that in Saskatchewan. Now I suppose this is something of a game with the railway companies. Part of the game is that by making their losses look as large as possible the railways may get a higher subsidy from the Federal Government. I am sure that the railway companies don't expect to get approval to abandon all this 5,500 miles of track. That would go across Canada once and almost back again. So they put every possible branch line on the list in the hopes that they can get a fair number of approvals for abandonment. On the other hand we have to assume that the CPR and the CNR are playing this game for keeps. They claimed losses on branch lines in Western Canada of \$27 million in 1969 — I don't have figures for later years. What happens if this 5,500 miles of branch lines are shut down?

We became alarmed at this prospect when we took office and we set up a study group headed by the former Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Harold Horner, who is eminently well qualified to look into this problem. We are in the process of studying the impact of wholesale rail line abandonment on farmers, small communities and rural municipalities. We have a lot more work to do, but our preliminary analysis indicates that to save the railways \$27 million a year — and that's their figure, frankly I don't think it is nearly that high — rail line abandonment

would shift \$20 million at least, even in relatively direct costs, to farmers, businessmen and taxpayers of the three prairie provinces. I have been talking about all three prairie provinces but the number one target is Saskatchewan. As I said before, of the 5,500 miles proposed for abandonment, fully 3,000 are in Saskatchewan. Three out of every nine miles of track in Saskatchewan will disappear if the railways had their way. You can stand on the railway platform, if there still is a platform, at, say, Bladworth and look down the line to Davidson about nine miles and imagine what would happen if three miles of that track was lifted. That is the sort of thing, in a graphic way, that is going to happen everywhere in Saskatchewan — three out of every nine miles will go. You will get some inkling of what rail line abandonment in this province would do if every time you see three miles of track you think that one mile wasn't there.

Let me return to this \$27 million figure which the railway says they are losing on the branch lines across the prairies. We have estimated that the abandonment will shift \$20 million onto the farmers, businessmen and the local people. Let me break this down for you.

First of all, there are increased trucking costs for the farmers affected. To a farmer whose rail line has been abandoned, whose elevator is gone, it means more miles to haul, more time spent in hauling, probably a bigger truck, certainly higher truck maintenance costs. We conducted three studies in order to get an idea of what the impact would be of rail line abandonment. We conducted particular studies in the Melfort region, the Medstead region and the Kerrobert region. These covered 850 miles of line which was up for abandonment. We did a study of the additional yearly increase of trucking costs which would be incurred by the farmers that use that line. We reached the figure of \$1,525 in extra trucking costs for each mile of line abandoned. We think that these studies are relatively typical. And if they are, then if you apply that to the 5,500 miles up for abandonment, it means a shift of costs from the railways to the farmers for trucking costs, of \$8.3 million a year.

I don't need to tell any Member of this House that if we start hauling millions and millions of bushels of wheat fairly extensive distances on municipal roads and provincial highways, there is going to be a very high annual maintenance figure and there is going to be a high annual capital cost figure to construct and keep up these roads. And it is going to go up year after year. I have to point out that the road beds for the railways are already there. But in many cases to haul heavy loads by trucks we would have to construct fairly good road beds if farmers are going to have to haul loads, 30, 40, 50, 60 miles. Our preliminary estimate is that this could amount to between \$9 million a year and \$12 million a year for the three prairie provinces, depending on what assumptions of quality of road you make.

There will be business losses in villages and small towns which lose their railway service. It's difficult to put a dollar figure on store closures and business failures — but we included what I think is a very conservative figure of \$1 million a year.

With the decline in small communities we'll see a decline in population and we will see significant amounts of wasted

social capital. By this I mean facilities which aren't used to their full capacity — schools, hospitals, power lines and telephone lines. This could amount to another \$1 million a year. Admittedly that is an estimate.

In total, just for those four items, extra trucking costs which we tried to estimate fairly carefully, extra highway and municipal road construction and maintenance costs, which we tried to estimate fairly carefully and losses to small town merchants and wastage of schools, hospitals and the like which we have just rounded off at low figures of \$1 million a year, we come up with a figure of \$20 million or more which will be assessed against farmers and ratepayers across the prairies.

These are only the obvious costs to the prairie people in their communities. We all know some other costs. Villages will undoubtedly disappear. How do you put a price tag on the disappearance of a village? What is the appropriate bookkeeping entry when a merchant boards up his store and moves into the city where there are few jobs for him?

The railways and the Federal Government save what they claim to be \$27 million — I think it is much lower than that — that's a yearly figure. Farmers and other taxpayers pick up a tab of \$20 million for these obvious costs. Sure, that makes the railways more economic. It helps the elevator companies. But once again the man who pays is going to be the farmer.

Let me remind you again that one mile of track in every three is up for abandonment in Saskatchewan. So in order to make the railways more efficient, farmers will have to haul their grain up to 60 miles in some areas around Kyle. Up to 40 miles in areas around Mankota, Fir Mountain and Wood Mountain. Farmers will have to buy bigger trucks, carry bigger loads.

Towns and villages will lose revenues when the elevators shut down. With fewer people there will be tax increases for those who remain and this isn't included in our \$20 million figure.

Grain storage will be lost with the elevators that are removed and that storage will have to be replaced. The cost of that will ultimately come out of the farmers' pockets. That isn't in our \$20 million figure.

Rural municipality taxes will go up because of the increased wear and tear on grid roads caused by bigger trucks making longer hauls.

My short question is this: Why should the farmers be called upon to pay an extra \$20 million a year to improve the profitability of the CPR?

Now I know that the Grains Council is supposed to be looking at the whole picture — and I know Mr. Lang's Grains Group has commissioned a number of studies examining the impact of rail line abandonment. I'm not that much impressed.

I'm not impressed with the hastily conceived and produced study on trucking costs commissioned by the Grains Group. Our people looked at their estimates of additional trucking costs and felt that they were very much understated. They, in fact, assumed, as we think, that farmers could keep their present

trucks and they wouldn't need to replace them even though they were going to have to haul very much longer distances.

I'm not impressed because in all this preparation for rail line abandonment not once has the Government of Saskatchewan been consulted or invited to express its views. Some of our officials have been asked to supply data or to supply some technical information. But at the policy level we have never been asked for any comment. We are out in the cold.

In fact there was no hint at all, there certainly was no hint that we were going to have anything to say about rail line abandonment until the federal election last fall. Then one day in Saskatoon the Prime Minister was quoted as saying there would be no rail line abandonment, even after 1975 unless there was the agreement of the provincial government.

Then a few days later, Mr. Lang became concerned, the first expression of his concern that I found. And he said according to the Leader-Post of September 27th and I quote:

The Government, (meaning the Federal Government), will make changes in the present system only if farmers want those changes.

I want to underline the words of the Prime Minister, no rail line abandonment even after 1975, without the agreement of the provincial government. Mr. Lang, — "government will make changes in the present system only if the farmers want these changes."

One Liberal MLA, the Member for Moosomin (Mr. Gardner) sitting opposite was much more specific. I quote from the Leader-Post of October 19, 1972:

It was the Liberal Government in Ottawa that put a stop to rail line abandonment and has given the commitment that no railways will be abandoned without the sanction of the provinces concerned.

We were very glad to hear that. But, Mr. Speaker, if such a commitment was ever given, it was not given to the Province of Saskatchewan. There has been no letter or communication of any kind suggesting that the province would even be consulted, let alone be given the opportunity to say yes or no.

We have tried to obtain a commitment on this statement from the Prime Minister. On November 9th, 1972, I wrote a letter to Mr. Trudeau on this important issue. I will quote from parts of it, I think they are fair quotes:

On a trip to Saskatchewan during the recent Federal election campaign you were reported as having stated that no rail line abandonments would occur here except with the agreement of the Provincial Government. On at least one other occasion the Hon. Otto Lang gave similar assurances. I have taken the liberty of enclosing newspaper reports of these comments.

I am sure you can appreciate that the matter of abandonment of branch lines, of elevator points and the subsequent erosion of farm services and rural communities which inevitably follow are of grave concern

to the Government and the people of Saskatchewan.

Our Government has undertaken a study of the effects such wholesale abandonment would have upon our economic and social life. Although still not complete, preliminary findings reveal some serious cost transfers to farmers and taxpayers.

Because this matter is of deep concern to us, because the planned date of such abandonments is less than three years away, and because it has been indicated such plans will not proceed without provincial agreement, may I suggest the following:

1. That our Government be supplied with further information on the kind of consultations you envisage.
2. That dates, times and places be suggested when representatives of our two governments can meet on this matter.

I can assure you that we are anxious to begin discussions as soon as possible, and accordingly look forward to hearing from you.

That was my letter of November 9, 1972. My office received an acknowledgment from one of the Prime Minister's assistants dated November 16th, which said that the letter had been received and would be brought to Mr. Trudeau's attention. We have not yet received a reply in substance. I think we all appreciate that the Prime Minister has been very busy and he's got many problems. We do however urge upon him that he turn his mind to this matter and at least set up the basis for consultation. This is not to suggest that any inordinate amount of time has elapsed, although it is three months. But it is three very busy months in the life of the Government of Canada. We are making the point that we should like to know where the Federal Government stands.

The Government of Saskatchewan has had no assurance of commitment of any sort except through the columns of the Leader-Post. And I, for one, Mr. Speaker, do not feel entirely comfortable in relying on that source or any other newspaper report when it comes to the issue of this importance.

Mr. Speaker, the only commitment we know anything about with any certainty is the commitment which the Federal Liberal Government gave to the railways to remove restrictions on applications to abandon branch lines in 1975. That is the only commitment we know anything about, and that date is not far off. I think we must be concerned in view of the fact that we are faced with potentially disastrous rail line abandonments and that we have no assurance from the Federal Government that they will intervene. Indeed their only formal act is to indicate some years ago that they would not intervene, that indeed the issue would be open in 1975. We must indeed be concerned.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — Now let me state two or three assertions which I think will put in perspective our Government's deep concern about this issue.

My first assertion is this; that the continued existence of our pattern of life in rural Saskatchewan is in jeopardy. True, we have lived with declining populations on the farms for 35 years. We have seen the average size of farm grow to what it is today, perhaps 800 acres. Our network of rural service centres has gone through some serious readjustments. But by and large we have hung on to a basic system of family-operated farms and a viable service centre system. The question we have to ask ourselves is this: how much longer can we permit current trends to continue before there is not only a quantitative change but a qualitative change in the whole system of rural life? My own assessment is this; that if nothing is done, we don't have very much time before we'll see much larger aggregations of land, corporate management of farms and further threats to our rural communities. Mr. Speaker, we must stand against this.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — My second assertion is that people and their governments need to give high priority to actions which will slow the trend of rural depopulation and strengthen our basic service centre system. The directions in which we must move are many and widely varied. We've discussed them in the House on many occasions and I don't pretend it will be any easy job. As a Government we are trying. We have put forward many proposals to strengthen rural life, strengthen the small farmer, strengthen the small community. We believe they are bearing fruit.

My third assertion is that of all the dangers which loom on the horizon, of all the dangers to rural life in Saskatchewan as we know it, the dangers of increasing technology which dictates larger tractors and larger combines and the rest, all of these pale into insignificance beside the devastating prospect to rural Saskatchewan of wholesale rail line abandonments.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — Nothing that I can visualize or any Member of this House can visualize would do more damage to the rural way of life as we know it than the abandonment of 2,000 or even 3,000 miles of branch line.

With this perspective, which reflects the Government's approach, we plan to fight wholesale rail line abandonment right down to the wire.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — We plan to fight for a rationalization plan which will strengthen and not destroy the family farm . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — . . which will help us to retain just as many healthy rural communities as possible across this province.

We in this province must say this; by all means, we must improve our grain transportation system. No Member of this House, I suggest is wedded to the idea that no rural elevator

should close or is even wedded to the idea that not one single branch line should be removed. We must improve our grain transportation system but not through the wholesale abandonment of rail lines. Our primary concern must be to improve the returns to farmers and to safeguard the interests of farm communities.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — There are many other things we need to do. We need to improve trackage to the West Coast, including new tracks where necessary to provide alternate routes through the winter. We have been very lucky this winter, we weren't last winter. We should act now before we are faced with another bad winter.

Third, we need to upgrade port facilities. We need to get the maximum use of such ports as Prince Rupert, Vancouver and Churchill.

And in a more general sense we say it's time that the needs of Western Canada were given recognition in a new National Transportation Policy. We will be pressing the Federal Government in the days ahead for a complete New Deal in transportation for Western Canada.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — We'll be calling a provincial conference on transportation and freight rates very soon. But our very first job, Mr. Speaker, is to get the ironclad agreement of the Federal Government that there will be no rail line abandonments other than on the terms which they themselves have stated. That there will be no rail line abandonments until every alternative has been explored, until all the social and economic costs to producers, businesses and communities have been added up, until the Government of Saskatchewan agrees to the abandonment and in any event that we get a commitment that there be no abandonments at least until 1980.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, what we're asking for is a commitment by the Federal Government along the lines which senior members of the Federal Government including the Prime Minister and the Minister in Charge of the Canadian Wheat Board have given during the election campaign. We are not asking people to adopt our program. We are asking the Federal Government to adopt their program. And that surely is reasonable.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members on both sides of the House to support this Resolution, to support it unanimously and support it resoundingly. Mr. Speaker, I think there should be no doubt in Ottawa about where Saskatchewan stands on the matter of rail line abandonment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Blakeney: — Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by Mr. Larson (Pelly) this motion.

That this Assembly urges the Federal Government that no railway branch line abandonment be considered in Saskatchewan before all the alternatives are thoroughly studied and the social and economic costs to producers businesses and communities be ascertained and, further, that no abandonments be allowed without the prior agreement of the Government of Saskatchewan and, specifically, that no abandonments be authorized until 1980.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. E.F. Gardner (Moosomin:) — Mr. Speaker, before I begin my regular remarks I should like to make one comment regarding something the Premier said. Mr. Blakeney said that villages will undoubtedly disappear and I should like to inform him that we lost our railroad about 12 years ago in the villages of Kennedy, Wawota, Windthorst and some others. And I can tell him that the people of these villages are alive and well and the villages are alive and well. They had no intention at all of disappearing and I am sure that the people of these villages will see that this doesn't happen.

Mr. Speaker, the motion we are discussing today is rail line abandonment and I am sure it's going to be an interesting debate. It is interesting not so much because of the arguments and statistics that we are hearing but because of the motives behind such a motion in the first place. You may well be asking yourself, Mr. Speaker, why the Premier of this province, Mr. Blakeney, early in the Session would be making his first major speech, other than the Throne Speech 30 minutes on radio on the subject of rail line abandonment. I can tell you the reason is fairly obvious. The Premier, in the past year, has made a conscious and deliberate effort to stay away from controversy and stay out of trouble. You don't get into trouble, Mr. Speaker, talking about rail line abandonment.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Messer) is committing political suicide, first with the recent fiasco regarding the Foreign Ownership Bill and now, of course, with the disastrous Land Bank Act, and the Minister of Northern Saskatchewan (Mr. Bowerman) because he failed to win the Athabasca by-election in spite of massive expenditures of taxpayers' money.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — The Attorney General (Mr. Romanow) is in trouble because of his arrogant attitude toward the general public and toward the Press.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — The Minister of Education (Mr. MacMurchy) has both the teachers and the trustees after him. He doesn't know which way to turn.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — The Minister of Industry (Mr. Thorson) is the laughing stock of the province because of the Roumanian Tractor deal.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — At this time, Mr. Speaker, the province is faced with major problems in the fields of health services, welfare, unemployment and I repeat, unemployment, lack of industrial development and so on. The NDP are increasing our taxes at an alarming rate. But what does Mr. Blakeney make his major radio speech on? Rail line abandonment. You don't get into trouble talking about rail line abandonment. Of course, you don't do too much good either. The Premier is willing to let his Ministers accept the blame for the mess the NDP have created in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — Perhaps their unpopularity will make them less of a threat to his leadership. The Premier has sacrificed his Ministers for his own political ambitions. You know, Mr. Lewis is finished federally. I think this is an accepted fact. I am sure Mr. Blakeney would like to go to that federal leadership convention free of any political blemish.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — So, Mr. Blakeney talks about rail line abandonment. It's like talking about saving the family farm. Everybody wants to save the family farm — you can't lose. And I am sure that no one in this Legislature, Liberal or NDP, wants to see any railroads taken out if it will be harmful in any way to the farmers or other residents of rural Saskatchewan. I am sure that no political party in Canada, provincial or federal, favors the wholesale abandonment of rail lines. But it makes good material for a political speech.

During the latter days in the federal campaign last fall the NDP in this province realized they were in deep trouble. Expected NDP gains became hopeless and they faced the loss of present members such as John Burton. Then they decided to talk about rail line abandonment. There was an almost hysterical rush by the NDP to jump on the railroad band wagon. We saw numerous reports of this in the paper in the last days of the campaign and I have many of them here: "Loss of Railroads Feared by Knight"; "Rail Abandonment Rapped"; and so on. Even David Lewis came out and got in the act. He was invited too. Just prior to the federal election last fall Mr. Lewis announced the NDP agriculture program which calls for a halt to rail line abandonment. This is what he said, "Now this is a little bit ridiculous to be calling a halt to something that has already been halted for over 10 years in this province".

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — But the NDP probably felt it was good politics. Everyone got into the act, both provincial and federal. I have many quotes here of this. "Benjamin Concerned About Abandonment".

We turn it upside down and we see another one about Mr. Taylor. "Rail Line Abandonment Repercussions Outlined". And Mr. Taylor is reported, as follows:

This will kill over 300 communities in Saskatchewan over the next few years according to Social Services Minister Taylor.

I don't know where he gets his figures. He's got 3,000 miles being abandoned and so on. I am sure that most of the Ministers will recall that they were very quick to get in on the rail line abandonment band wagon. "MacMurchy Says Rail Line Decision Made". He quotes at Gravelbourg the fact that the decision is made and Mr. Trudeau will announce it right after the federal election. He has it on his desk and he is going to reveal it right after the election. So we find that Skoberg, MacMurchy and many others are telling us that those terrible Liberals or Conservatives are going to take away our railroads. Even Frank Buck in Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain.

And you know, we received some very strange information during late October 1972 when the federal campaign was coming to a close. For example, I have a letter here which was sent to all MLAs in late October. I will quote from that letter. And I am not critical of having received this letter at all. I was pleased to receive it. It's addressed to all MLAs and it says:

Mr. Don Faris, MLA for Arm River has asked that we send to all MLAs a map showing the rail lines that are proposed for abandonment in the Grains Group Report. A map is attached which is a slight enlargement . .

I am still quoting from the letter:

. . of the map that is included in the P.S. Ross Report on grain-handling and transportation costs. The black line railways are those that are termed light density lines devoted to grain traffic which would have to be abandoned to reduce the total number of elevators in the West in 1969 to 3,600 from approximately 4,900.

Now I don't know who P.S. Ross is or who ever. You get a lot of people doing some kind of a study these days and making a report. I don't know if anybody pays any attention and certainly no government is bound by their suggestions.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — You know, this is similar, Mr. Speaker, to the example of the Task Force Report on Farming. In the Task Force Report on Farming a group of university people made some vague recommendations referring to farms in Nova Scotia or some place down East. And the NDP for political reasons tried to mislead the people into believing that this is somehow government policy. Anyway, we got this map with some black lines on it and naturally I looked at the ones in my area as a matter of interest.

Strangely enough about the same time and this was late October or right at the end of the election campaign, we also received a pamphlet from Mr. Frank Buck, the NDP candidate in Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain which included a similar map with

rail lines also shown in black. The heading is here and I am sure everyone would be interested in looking at it. Mr. Buck says:

We can't afford the Liberal and Conservative plans to abandon all these rail lines, (says Frank Buck).

The only catch, Mr. Speaker, apparently the map which Mr. Faris sent to us and I have it right here in front of me also, wasn't politically impressive enough to suit Frank so he added a few black lines of his own.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — In fact, Mr. Speaker, I have the map right here and you can see the line from Maryfield up through Kipling and up to Kendal and this happens to be the line, Mr. Speaker, which is used both by the Member from Cannington and myself to ship our grain. It wasn't on any other map but Mr. Buck pencilled it in on his. It looked pretty good to have that big, extra, black line.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that my colleague, Tom Weatherald or myself were particularly worried. And I am sure that we both look forward to shipping our grain on this railroad for many years to come in spite of Mr. Buck's dire prediction.

Someone asked who drew this map. This is, of course, the same Frank Buck who was hired by the Blakeney Government right after the election for over \$13,700 per year. Now I don't know, Mr. Speaker, what job Mr. Buck is doing for the Blakeney Government. I don't know if anybody else knows what he does for the Blakeney Government. I only hope, Mr. Speaker, that he is not sitting in some little room in this building drawing black lines on maps indicating railroads to be abandoned for the Premier of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to give you massive statistics on railroads but I should like to make one thing very clear. I'd like to make this point very clear, Mr. Speaker. The only major rail line abandonment that ever took place in Saskatchewan occurred in the early 1960s when the NDP were the government in Saskatchewan and the Conservatives were the government in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — The railroad that passed through my home town and it served the town of Tom Weatherald where Tom delivers his grain, was ripped up and abandoned by the CPR, 122 miles of railroad at that time. The local people had very active committees trying to save our railroads. I was involved in that. I appeared as a witness at some of the hearings and so on. Appeals for help were made to the NDP in Regina and the Conservatives in Ottawa. They appealed to the NDP here. They asked the Premier of the time to help them out, the NDP. No help was forthcoming. We lost our railroad at that time with an NDP government here.

But note this, Mr. Speaker. Shortly after this the Liberals were elected in Ottawa and the Liberals were elected in Saskatchewan. In the 10 year period after we lost our railroad the Liberal governments involved didn't allow this type of action to take place anywhere in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — In spite of all of the fancy talk and fancy speeches, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to very carefully note this fact. The only major line abandonment occurred in this province with an NDP government in Regina and a Conservative government in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gardner: — Now, Mr. Speaker, of course, we are opposed to any plan that would deprive our rural people of needed rail lines and, of course, we will support any motion which indicates that. My sympathies are not with the CPR or the CNR or any other railroad. That should be obvious. And I wish to say this, Mr. Speaker, that the railroads may be capable of using devious means to support their case for rail line abandonment. I am well aware of that. Mr. Speaker, we are in general agreement with the motion but it appears inadequate in this very important aspect. To improve the motion and to make its meaning clearer I am going to propose the following amendment seconded by Mr. Weatherald (Cannington). I have it right here, Mr. Speaker.

That the following words be added to the motion:

and further that the railroad companies be obligated to:

1. Provide a high standard of service on present lines.
2. Provide adequate maintenance and improvements on rail lines and equipment so that a high standard of service can be maintained.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. L. Larson (Pelly): — Mr. Speaker, the performance of the Member for Moosomin (Mr. Gardner) never ceases to amaze me. He spent about 20 minutes talking about how wonderful rail line abandonment is and all the great things that happen when rail lines are abandoned. How the towns of Wawota and Kennedy are flourishing after the rail lines have been abandoned. Then he turns around and he moves an amendment that is totally nebulous and against everything that he has said. He has again, Mr. Speaker, totally and completely outlined the position of the Liberal Party in this whole Legislature. They speak for and against at the same time. I am wondering how long they can continue "to ride both sides of the fence". The people of Saskatchewan, of course, are very aware of them riding both sides of the fence. If they think there is an inch of politics involved they will ride one side. If they think there is no politics involved they will ride the other. What an image, Mr. Speaker, what an image.

I want to say the Premier has given a very good outline of some of the reasons why this Resolution should be given unanimous consent by this House. When proper account is taken of the historical development of transportation in Saskatchewan,

it has to be said that it reads almost like a fairy tale. It's full of dreams, full of ideology, full of faith, work, adventure, and it even has a taste of romance to it. To those who spun the dreams and the ideas, a debt and a tribute is due. To those who had faith in the whole project several generations are indebted. To those who provided the brain, the brawn, the sweat and the toil, the whole of Canada will be eternally indebted.

Out of a vast wilderness, untamed, traversed by canoes, small boats and wagon trails, the completion of the railroads transformed the West into the highly developed, prosperous and well travelled country we have today. The history of the Canadian West may be divided into three overlapping but distinct eras. That of the Indians, that of the fur traders, and finally, that of assimilation to modern culture.

From the viewpoint of transportation there is no marked break between the first two eras, but the change from the second to the third is a radical one. The building of railways from Lake Superior to the Pacific Coast revolutionized conditions in that area and led to its exploitation from the eastern centres.

The growing interest in the West, which became effective about the middle of the 19th century was focused on three aims; to preserve it as a British or Canadian territory; to people and develop it and to establish overland communication with the East.

The fusion of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies as early as 1821 under the name of the Hudson's Bay Co. ushered in a new era in the West. The end of intense competition brought order into the West and to the native people.

The impact of this merger coupled with the genius of Sir George Simpson, Governor of the North West, was to be felt for a long time to come. Although somewhat earlier, the need for railway transportation was very evident, water transportation continued to be the most important, yet it was basically designed for an unpeopled country. The fact that to the south the American railways were being built, and in fact had reached the Red River in 1871, put a severe strain on what was basically a water transportation system.

It became very clear that if agriculture was to develop in the Canadian West a railway had to be built.

After much political controversy and change of governments in Ottawa MacDonal's Railway Act was passed in 1872. This Act allowed for the granting of 25 million acres of land in aid of building a Pacific Railway.

In 1873 the Canadian Pacific Transport system under private jurisdiction came into being. The mammoth job that it was confronted with was not evident to its founders. It was felt that with government concessions of land sufficient capital could be realized to complete the job.

The financial requirements and the funds needed were much greater than ever had been anticipated. As a result after much negotiating, political manoeuvring, and bargaining several arrangements were finally agreed on and worked out. The basic motivating factors in all this was the great need for building the railroad.

In total some 25 million acres of land valued at \$1 per acre was granted. \$37.7 million worth of road bed from Selkirk to Lake Superior and to Port Moody were granted. With this land went mineral rights, sales concessions, choice of quality, as well as control of running rights and monopoly of freight hauls. With all these problems and concessions on November 7, 1885 the dream of Sir John A. MacDonald and a very great many other Canadians were realized. The last spike was driven. Canada was joined by steel from coast to coast.

The principal factor that permeates this great achievement was based on good faith. Faith in Canada as a nation, faith in the future of this nation, but probably more important, the faith that by contracts and agreements it would serve the transportation needs without failure or favor for a long time to come.

That this principle has been adhered to and that the service rendered has been satisfactory, is proven by the growth and development of the West. In the ensuing years since the railroads and branch lines were built and operated this growth can only be described as phenomenal.

The role and the development of the railroads kept pace during this era. For a time it seemed that all rail transportation had been solved. That all this was not so, became evident when highways, roads and automobile travel began to cut into passenger service of the railroads. The reaction to this threat is an interesting one.

Rather than meet the challenge with improved facilities and better services, the easy route was taken. Loss of passenger traffic was a serious and the first real threat to the principle that had built the railroads in the first place. Revenue losses were used as the prime factor. Little thought or action was given to any other factor. The net result of this has been a virtual loss today of passenger services. The role of the Government and the Department of Transport in this development is very significant.

By application and by evidence the CPR has virtually abandoned the passenger service, while the CNR has curtailed it very much. The loss of passenger service, however, is not the most serious and the most damaging factor in today's transportation.

The advent of mechanization on the farms in the '40s and the '50s was paralleled by mechanization on the railroads. The introduction of the diesel engine heralded a totally new era. It replaced thousands of men's jobs. It lengthened by several hundred miles the need for divisional points and services. It made it possible to carry much greater loads at higher speeds with smaller crews.

The change and impact of this was felt very severely in a great many communities. The closing of the round house has been the toughest economic blow that many of the western towns have felt.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that these changes were absorbed without too many complaints on behalf of the railroad patrons. It was not until a general program of station closing and the removal of the agent that the public became

alarmed. Again, this entailed the loss of jobs, the displacement of families and disruption of services. The public generally, was receptive to some change in this direction but at no time were they prepared to accept the long-term objectives that were envisioned by the railway management.

The process of station closures and the removal of agents has been a very subtle and rather sporadic one. The pattern is now a very familiar one. The station that is designated for closure is known only to divisional management. The performance for several years is carefully documented and studied, with the emphasis not on service or need, but on economics.

A careful plan is prepared of how to convince people that the loss of the station agent will not really be a hardship is prepared. A glowing picture is presented of how services will be maintained or improved. Finally, a meeting at the local station is called and a very high pressure public relations person is sent out to attend the meetings. He is well armed with statistics. He is well able to present a glowing picture of how and why the station is not needed. In short, he usually is able to convince the local people that they are getting a good deal.

Out of this procedure has evolved the program now known as Servocentres. What Servocentres really do is totally to destroy the concept of personalized service and attendance by an agent at the station. The principle of the Servocentre has a much further and damaging objective. If the purpose was only to computerize services it would be liveable. As the services of the railroads have declined and been abandoned there have been other serious side effects.

These side effects are now threatening the very basis and principle of the building of the railroads in the first place. The effects on the whole way of life in the West is being threatened. It is now quite generally accepted that rail line abandonment is to go ahead. The protest and fears of the consequences have, to a large extent, gone unnoticed or been ignored. Some vague attempts have been made to try to pacify the fears and consequences. The real culprit in the whole exercise has been the Federal Government. As a result of these very weak and feeble attempts, we had in 1960, the MacPherson Commission investigation and report.

It is to be regretted, that in the terms of reference in this investigation all the emphasis was put on economics rather than other values. Little value was placed on Saskatchewan traditions or physical hardships that its recommendations would create.

For example, Mr. Speaker, it found that there are about 8,480 miles of track in Western Canada. Of this amount, according to the railways, 5,500 miles are solely related to grain, with 3,600 miles of this in Saskatchewan. As of September 1, 1966 the two railways had applied for abandonment of 4,100 miles. In Saskatchewan the miles of track abandonment would total 2,900 miles. In the year 1970-71, if this plan had been followed it would have meant the closing of 377 delivery points out of a total of 991 or some 34 per cent.

This, Mr. Speaker, would have been the result of the implementation of the MacPherson Commission Report. This was the proposal by the Conservative Government. The terms of

reference, again it should be noted, were purely economic. Farmers who vote Conservative should keep this fact in mind. Had the Conservatives been the Government in all possibility we would have had this kind of grain handling system in effect today.

But a very interesting thing happened in 1966. The National Transportation Act was passed and very significantly provided for subsidies to the railways on account of light traffic density lines and passenger traffic. As could be expected with a subsidy program in effect the railroads were ordered in 1967, by the Government of Canada, not to abandon any further rail lines until 1975.

However, this has not deterred the railways from proceeding with their plans to abandon lines. Right now plans are going ahead to complete the Servocentre programs. In the Dauphin, Swan River, Hudson Bay, Kelvington, Canora, Humboldt regions, out of 48 original station agencies only 14 are to be left open. The procedure is the same, the decisions have been made, the public relations job is done and the agencies are being closed.

This is the procedure that has taken place with regard to Servocentres and withdrawal of passenger service. Besides the MacPherson Commission Report sponsored by the Conservative Government, several other studies have been made and recommendations made.

This study was conducted by Underwood, McLellan and Associates Limited of Saskatoon on the economic effect of rationalization of the grain handling and transportation systems on the Prairie communities. Again, Mr. Speaker, the emphasis was on economics. After making several comments on the savings to be made, only a very small reference is made to disruptions on community life. After a study of the Qu'Appelle Basin Report, Underwood, McLellan and Associates note:

The experience of 21 trade centres studied after closing elevator facilities, the conclusion reached was that all the centres used in the comparison were responding to a similar set of forces not much associated with the presence or the absence of rail lines or elevators.

Again, the economic factors supersede the human factors. Again, it relates to what seems to be the theme for Saskatchewan, depopulate and centralize. I cannot subscribe to this theory, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Larson: — It is very interesting to note further conclusions of the Underwood, McLellan Report.

1. Within the next 10 years the smallest 200 of the 540 communities would decline to where they would house only the elevator agent, if that. 2. The next largest 100 places would decline to the level of the 200 now smallest, in the next 10 years to a population of less than 25 and would be on the verge of passing out of existence, in spite of what my friend from Moosomin says about his villages affected by abandonment. 3. That the loss of elevator and rail services does not weaken

or strengthen the life of a town or a community. 4. The loss of a few jobs does not mean too much except to the very smallest community. 5. That no more than a total of 200 jobs in addition to the railroaders would be affected.

All in all the report fails to consider the very real obligation the railroads have to provide basic services. Secondly, it fails to take into account the price Canadians have paid to have and enjoy the use of the rail system.

I want now, Mr. Speaker, to make some reference to The Canada Grains Council. This was a search for a cheaper and more efficient grain-handling system. This search was chaired by Mr. E.E. Baxter, supported by Mr. C. Owen, former assistant of the Canada Grains Council, and Alan McLeod of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Again, we find that the principal concern is economic.

The most startling finding and recommendation of this group is to reduce the number of elevators to an economic factor that bears no relationship to reality, to needs, or any form of consideration for people's hardships or disruption. The alarming factors, here again, are that economic, rather than human values are paramount. No consideration is given to the position that the provincial governments will be put into with regard to road construction, road maintenance or the costs of the same.

The Grains Council Report recommends that the elevator system be reduced from the present 1,900 now in operation to 280 by the year 1990. Out of these 280, 24 will be classed as A points for major assembly and preparation of grain for shipment and 67 will be classed as B points or points of intermediate handling with a capacity of two to four million bushels. 89 points would be classed as keeper points only.

Out of this picture a total of 723 miles of railroad would be abandoned.

I want to congratulate the Premier for introducing this Resolution. The whole future pattern of Saskatchewan rural life is at stake in what is happening.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Larson: — I would remind all Members of this House of the great concessions that were granted the railways in return for providing a transportation system for the West. I would remind this House of the basic principle, the faith, that was the permeating factor in putting the railway through in the first instance. The principle that motivated men in the 1800s is as valid today as it was then. To say now that we will abandon some 1,000 or more miles of rail lines is to condemn future generations to a social way of life that they have no say in, or may not suit them at all. For those reasons and for many more that I could give, I recommend all Members of this House, to support the Resolution. I see absolutely no value in the amendment and, therefore, see no reason to support it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. J.A. Pepper (Weyburn): — Mr. Speaker, as I rise to enter into debate on this

Resolution and the amendment, I feel I would be remiss if I did not offer some personal views on the significance of this issue. Before we vote, I hope each and every Member in this Assembly will take time to study and analyze all aspects involved.

I am confident, Mr. Speaker, that all Members feel as I do, that we should band together at any time when an issue arises which has the potential to impose immense economic and social hardships on our people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Pepper: — Mr. Speaker, without a doubt, the prospect of massive rail line abandonments imposing these hardships is very real indeed.

There are times when political philosophies have their proper place during debate, however, I cannot see how being a Member on this side of the House, or that side of the House should affect the unanimous passage of this Resolution. Too often, Mr. Speaker, resolutions come forward, they are debated, voted on and forwarded to the proper authorities for their attention and nothing more is heard of it. I certainly hope that this does not happen with this one, it is much too important.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Pepper: — Mr. Speaker, I have heard it said in the past that this issue has been blown out of proportion. I have heard it said, Mr. Speaker, that those opposing the implementation of this policy are 'over-reacting'. I want to ask everyone in this Assembly, if it is right to assert that we are over-reacting, when we become concerned about the very survival of rural Saskatchewan as we know it today. I think, Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite obvious to all of us.

I am sure that I share the sentiments of most when I say that it is very regrettable that this whole area of rail line abandonment has become such a volatile political issue. It is unfortunate and, indeed, undesirable when political wrangling overshadows the very real implications that are involved.

The present abandonment proposals of the Federal Government will have no greater impact than right here in the Province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, as it now stands, Western Canada, in general, and Saskatchewan in particular, will not experience the real ramifications of this program until 1975, when the recommendations are slated to be brought in.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that in less than two years, we could find ourselves faced with the reality of having to watch a life style deteriorate and fade away, and all because of the very issue which we, as representatives of the people, are debating here this afternoon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Pepper: — Some people say with conviction that it is only reasonable to expect some of the lines and country elevators will become outmoded and it is logical that they should be eliminated. To me, Mr. Speaker, that argument is logical, but

only if based on pure economics. Surely it is not unreasonable to expect that any program, regardless of its significance, should take into account the social implications as well.

From an economist's point of view it might be right to tear down country elevators and to eliminate branch lines to a community if from a dollars and cents standpoint the profit margin is low. However, is it socially acceptable, or morally right to follow this same course if, in the process, the very existence of that small community is threatened?

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think the answer is obvious. For a moment I should like to turn to a few specifics to further my point. Presently, we are told that we have some 8,500 miles of rail lines in Saskatchewan. Present plans call for the elimination of 3,000 miles, or one-third of the total. The elevator companies now operate about 2,700 elevators in the province. Eight hundred of these would be slated for closure. There are 540 communities served by the branch lines involved. If present plans proceed, up to 300 communities could conceivably disappear. Now, Mr. Speaker, these are not my statistics, they are rather based on the proposals themselves.

Allow me to localize this situation even further, Mr. Speaker. By carefully studying the abandonment proposals of the Grains Group we note that the Weyburn constituency will be hit hard. 340 miles of rail line will be eliminated. In the immediate Weyburn area, 170 miles of track will be phased out. These closures will adversely affect the communities served and if you will pardon me, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to name them: Weyburn; Goodwater; Stoughton; Heward; Creelman; Froude; Griffin; Hume; Grassdale; Colgate; Bromhead; Gladmar; Minton; Tribune; Ceylon; Hardy and Radville. Yes, Mr. Speaker, a total of 17 small communities will be adversely affected. Over 2,000 people will be affected if these abandonments proceed and I am sure one could find similar conditions in most other constituencies around the province.

In the Weyburn constituency, under present proposals, 35 elevators would be closed down which would eliminate vast storage facilities, where, during the last crop year, these elevators handled over 7.2 million bushels of grain.

More specifically, let us for a moment focus on the Goodwater line, a line which I know well. The Goodwater line of the Canadian National Railway, a total of 26.8 miles of line will be eliminated, if we are to believe what the present proposals state. This stretch of track will hit the small communities on this line — Goodwater, Colgate, where the average population of these villages is 65. The four elevators, which are on the list to go, last year handled over 600,000 bushels of grain. Some may say and think that this is insignificant in the total picture. However, such is not the case.

This case can apply to every area affected. By eliminating storage facilities and taking out the lines several hardships will surface. Farmers will have to haul their grain greater distances. To do this, Mr. Speaker, they will have to purchase bigger trucks, those that have trucks, are still hauling by tractor and trailers, but they will have to get larger trucks in order to carry bigger loads and these trips will result in deterioration of municipal road conditions. Towns and villages will lose tax revenues when the elevators close

and if town and village councils are to provide the same level of service, Mr. Speaker, to their communities, more taxes will be heaped on the remaining residents. The grain storage which is lost will have to be replaced and the cost of that will ultimately come out of the farmer's pocket. Rural municipal taxes will go up as the result of the increased wear and tear on the roads. Now, Mr. Speaker, I have listed only a few of the obvious costs which will be imposed on our rural residents, but there are other costs as well, costs, Mr. Speaker, which are difficult to tag with a price. I ask you, can anyone put a price tag on the disappearance of a village? I think the answer again is obvious. Perhaps being highly critical of railway companies for their drive to become more efficient is not the answer, however, more importantly it is absolutely vital that legislators take into account all the factors before proceeding with this program.

In the West, Mr. Speaker, we have a long standing complaint against Ottawa in regard to a number of agricultural matters. Freight rate revisions are long overdue, better transportation systems are needed, expanded storage facilities on the West Coast are needed and programs and policies to preserve and strengthen the agriculture industry are vital.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Pepper: — I say vital, Mr. Speaker, I say vital because in a province such as ours, where the vast majority of all economic activity is generated by the agricultural community, we cannot afford to settle for any program which will wreak hardship on this unique life style.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Pepper: — This Resolution asks the Federal Government to hold off until they have studied every possible consequence which could occur.

I am sure that if the Legislature unanimously forwards its concern, that the impact will be felt in Ottawa and at least we will succeed in doing our part as public servants to act in the best interest of the public.

Earlier, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the term 'price tag'. Might I just emphasize again that the contribution made by the farming industry has been invaluable. I feel that no price is too great to pay to ensure that in the future they are given the opportunity to continue fulfilling the needs of their fellows.

I conclude, Mr. Speaker, by urging all Members of this Assembly to join in and give their unanimous support to this Resolution and to defeat the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. J.R. Messer (Minister of Agriculture): — Mr. Speaker, the Resolution that is now being discussed in this Legislature stems directly in my mind from concerns and apprehensions caused throughout this province since the

Grains Group studies were made public.

It is of more than passing significance that during the last several years we have seen two major studies directed towards the problems of the agricultural industry in Western Canada. The first was the celebrated report on the Task Force on Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. The second is the group of studies developed by the Federal Grains Group. Both these studies were conceived in the Ottawa labyrinth. Their terms of reference and their direction were drawn and given without reference and their direction were drawn and given without reference to the provinces or people who were being directly affected by them.

It may be, in fact farmers know it to be, significant that the Task Force Report was prepared by a group of academics, most of whom hailed from Eastern Canada. It may also be significant that the research team of the Grains Group was initially headed up by a very capable employee of the CPR. He has now returned to his company and a no less able man has been seconded from the CNR to continue his work.

Now our past experience, Mr. Speaker, indicates that we should derive small comfort from the assurances of the Federal Government that the Grains Group reports are for study only. We should seriously question that it is not the intention of the Government to force changes in the transportation and handling system which are not in keeping with the way of life that people in Western Canada want. We were told the same thing about the Task Force Report.

Before that Report was even published we had the LIFT program — a recommendation of the Report — imposed with no consultation whatsoever.

The famous Price and Income Stabilization Plan followed soon after and it was only defeated through strenuous efforts of New Democratic Members of Parliament supported by major Western farm organizations.

We still have before us a slightly modified form of FARM PLAN, now known as Small Farms Development Program that I discussed a few days ago in this House. So, I repeat, we take small comfort from the statements of the Federal Government regarding their intentions with respect to the proposals put forward in these Grains Group studies.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think a legitimate question to ask is, what do these reports really tell us? I guess they tell us quite a bit. For one thing, the elevator system, the cost of the elevator system is spelled out in some detail in fact. The cost of operating elevators, the cost of divisional superintendents, depreciation, interest, taxes and so on are all set out for five years, the five years being 1964-65 to 1968-69.

We find that if 5,525 miles of railway had been abandoned, if there had been 1,300 fewer elevators in 1968-69, we would have saved 2.3 cents per bushel in elevator costs.

But this saving would have been at a cost of nearly 3 billion extra bushel miles of grain haul for prairie farmers. Assume a cost of three-tenths cent per bushel mile for hauling grain, then the cost would be around \$9 million. The added cost would have been borne by only about 25 per cent of the

Saskatchewan farmers.

We are further told that the future of the elevator system may be pretty shaky.

But even accepting the figures in the reports and assuming that elevator companies continue to consolidate at the same rate as in the last few years, the saving in elevator costs by 1980 would still be in the order of two or three cents per bushel.

We hear, Mr. Speaker, a lot of talk lately about that elevator system perhaps being obsolete. But again I think we have to ask, if in fact, there is some obsolescence in that system, to what extent.

Last year it handled practically one billion bushels without any real apparent strain. We are accustomed to visitors coming from foreign countries to look at it. Because, in fact, in the world it is judged as one of the most efficient grain-handling systems yet developed. That is not to say, Mr. Speaker, that there is not need of change in the future. I suppose that is why the Grains Group has looked toward some other system and I don't criticize them for that.

They costed out some systems of high throughput elevators that could be built in their minds for modest sums of about \$706 million. They also looked at a system of 22 inland terminals with high throughput elevator satellites to feed them. That system they estimated would cost \$907 million. They also further looked at a system of 80 or 100 inland terminals that might be built for \$680 million.

Remember that all these systems are suggested as possible replacements of a system we now have, that is pretty well paid for and owned, for the most part by Saskatchewan or prairie farmers themselves.

We may not have the best system that could be developed at this time and I am not suggesting that what we have cannot be improved upon. But surely, if we are to develop a better system it is not likely to be developed in the back rooms of Ottawa or in the back rooms in Toronto.

It seems to me to make common sense that we should start with what we have — a system that can handle huge volumes of grain — that farmers know they can work with — rather than fly off with a lot of imaginary paper constructed edifices.

As I have said, the country elevator system and the terminals were looked at in detail by the Grains Group. The operating companies were questioned in detail about their costs and these were given to the Grains Group consultants.

Farmers were also looked at by the Grains Group. They were looked at in some detail. The age and cost of running their trucks was determined. They advised researchers of the details of their costs.

The Grains Group also asked the railway companies for their costs. And according to the reports they produced them. They very generously supplied the Grains Group with three figures, Mr. Speaker. I have no way of knowing whether the consultants

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tried to get or even whether they did get any more information than these three figures. But they are all that are included in their reports. The figures were for 1969 when the railways moved 490 million bushels of grain.

The railway companies said that their "Long term variable costs" were \$80 million.

The 'Constant cost share' said to be allocated based on the proportion of variable grain costs to a total variable costs, was \$35 million.

The cost of light density traffic lines, said to include depreciation, and cost of money and operating costs on lines primarily related to grain traffic was \$27 million.

The total cost the railways reported was \$142 million or 29 cents per bushel.

I think it is worth mentioning that these costs were based on an 8 per cent after tax return on capital, which is a little more than 14 per cent before tax.

As something of an aside I might note here that the return on capital for elevator companies was computed at 8 per cent and for farmers 7 per cent.

Now I submit that this kind of information from the railway companies is just not good enough. Why should railway costs be cloaked in this aura of secrecy? Is it little wonder that no one really believes the estimates and the costs that they put forward? We are told that to maintain their competitive position it is necessary that railway costs be confidential. Well, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whom are they competing with?

Both railway companies operate huge fleets of trucks; both are in the marine business. If they are competing with each other, we see mightily little evidence of it in Saskatchewan.

The Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, does not accept the thesis that the railway costs are confidential. We call on the Government of Canada to pull aside the veil of secrecy and let us know precisely what is included in those railway costs which they brought forward. I suggest to this Legislature that there is only one reason for maintaining the secrecy surrounding railway costs — and it has to do with the theory of charging all the traffic will bear.

What other reason could there be?

The people of Saskatchewan consider that they have a legitimate stake in the railway system in this province. After all, generous federal governments conferred on railway companies more than 15 million acres of Saskatchewan land. Not just any land — but good land, fit for settlement and it was selected as such in order to provide Western Canada with a railway system.

Regrettably, this gift was not accompanied by any planning of our railway system. We have two major railway companies with lines scattered from Radville in the South to Meadow Lake in the North. We see inconsistencies and waste in our railroad systems that resulted from the intensive competition that did not exist in the earlier days, between railway companies.

We see CPR lines such as the Spalding-Naicam line — or the Nipawin-Smeaton line that cannot ship grain to Churchill because the line going to Churchill is a CNR track.

We see the CPR subdivision at Meadow Lake where they have to 'dead head' over 55 miles of CNR track to get to it.

There are two major railway lines within a stone's throw of each other all the way between Saskatoon and Unity.

I could go on to mention the extra miles that are involved in getting grain from Eatonville — an area in Saskatchewan and the Drumheller line in Alberta to the West Coast over CNR lines past Calgary and north to Edmonton before they head west. Or the situation of the CNR on the Gravelbourg line, but these examples I think are enough to illustrate my point.

This Government holds to the principle that before the people of this province are asked to surrender any rail lines, the railway system itself must be rationalized. So far the Canadian Transport Commission has displayed complete lack of initiative in seeing that this rationalization takes place. The National Transportation Act gives to the Commission authority to recommend exchange of branch lines between companies or the giving of running rights. It also confers on the Federal Government the authority to implement such recommendations.

We see no evidence, no evidence whatsoever of any planning or positive action by the Transport Commission or the Federal Government along these lines.

I submit that the Commission must do more than audit losses claimed by the railways or produce information to justify the abandonment of branch lines if they are to fill a useful role for the people of this country.

Now, what is the reason behind this little exercise that the Grains Group was launched upon, and that has now been turned over to the tender mercies of the Canada Grains Council? I suggest to you that there is one reason and one reason only and that is railway costs.

It will be of interest to you, Mr. Speaker, and Members of this Legislature, as it will to people of Saskatchewan that the railways gave the Grains Group one other figure. Assuming a four and one-half per cent rate of inflation the costs that will be claimed for the movement of grain to export position by 1980 will be over 47 cents per bushel. That is truly a shocking figure. Whether we believe it or not — and I repeat we have no way of assessing it — it must bring to every prairie farmer's mind and to every government on the prairies — indeed to every citizen — the Crows Nest Rates.

These rates average around 13 cents per bushel. The discrepancy must cause all of us genuine concern.

One must ask, Mr. Speaker, is this perhaps the real reason for this exercise? Or is the reason because the Federal Government is concerned about the subsidies paid on account of branch lines?

I would just digress here a moment to note the drastic effects of inflation as pictured in the Grains Group reports.

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I have mentioned figures that the railways use of four and one-half per cent that escalates costs by 60 per cent in a ten year period.

The farmer too is experiencing the relentless pressures of inflation, which is forcing consolidation on elevator companies.

If the Federal Government is genuinely concerned over the welfare of the farmer, surely the first thing, the most positive thing they could do would be to take decisive steps to control the spiral of inflation that escalates all his costs, as well, Mr. Speaker, as those incurred in moving his grain to market.

Now, let us return to this matter of subsidies for a moment. All transportation in this country is subsidized. Air transportation receives huge subsidies through the construction of terminals and landing runways, two huge terminals are now underway in Eastern Canada, one outside Montreal the other outside Toronto.

Marine transportation receives subsidies in their ports and harbours as well as in their ship building.

Provincial governments build highways to accommodate larger and larger trucks with no real charge passed on to the trucking companies to offset those increasing costs.

Why should it be anticipated that of all forms of transportation only railways could exist without subsidies?

Members of this House will realize too the subsidies paid on branch lines are substantially below what is paid to support passenger traffic on railways. We understand that losses claimed on account of passenger traffic are of the order of \$100 million compared to \$30 or \$40 million for branch lines.

Of course the Federal Government has recently provided 2,000 hopper cars to the railways for hauling grain. One might venture to wonder how necessary this was when the CPR can allocate over 400 cars to haul American grain to the West Coast over Canadian railways.

Is this another effort, Mr. Speaker, to illustrate the difference between what we are told it costs to haul grain and the Crows Nest rates?

People in this province wonder why it is that railway profits and earnings are high when the grain movement is high if the grain haul is in fact so unprofitable as the railway companies try to tell us.

Rightly or wrongly we cannot accept, we cannot credit, the railways' statements of costs of grain haul. And how can we accept it when the actual figures, the actual breakdown of costs are kept secret from us?

This Government has been vitally concerned since the beginning of this exercise by the Grains Group. We are vitally concerned over the possible prospect of removing almost 3,000 miles of branch lines in this province.

Our concern falls into the following categories, Mr. Speaker. 1. We are concerned about the extra cost that would be

involved in trucking grain from the farm to remote elevators. In their suggestions for abandonment, the railways have shown no concern over the denuding of whole areas of their transportation system.

There would not be a railway left between Rosetown and Swift Current. The whole area from Leoville to North Battleford would be without a rail line. Heavy grain lines such as Eston and Elrose are lumped in with lines that have not had a train on them for years.

Lines are proposed for abandonment where farmers would incur the cost of one million and even up to two million bushel miles of grain haul for every mile of track abandoned. Where farmers would incur costs of more than \$5,000 extra annually, for every mile of track abandoned.

2. We are concerned about the effect on communities, especially those where the removal of the jobs in the elevators, the taxes from the elevators and the shopping that would leave with the grain trucks would threaten the very existence of those communities.

There are over 300 communities in Saskatchewan on lines designated to be abandoned in the Grains Group reports. Of these, some are very small but there are many that we would hope could be preserved.

May I emphasize that it is the declared policy of this Government to do what we can to preserve our rural scene. We aim to preserve it to the extent that it is possible and to slow down or stop the erosion of our rural communities. We aim to maintain our farms at about the present numbers. We will not willingly see new costs imposed that would jeopardize their continued existence.

3. Removal of rail lines and the extra trucking that will result will have far reaching effects on our road and highway systems as we see them today. Our Department of Highways is studying this problem. Our municipalities are also gravely concerned. We all know what extra vehicles can do to a good gravelled road in a week or two of bad weather, or to dust free oil surfaced roads.

With all their studies of elevator configurations the Grains Group undertook no such study of this vital aspect.

4. The glaring inconsistency of the proposed wide scale abandonment must be plain for all of us to see. It says in effect that a farmer can haul grain more efficiently in his 200 or 300 bushel truck than the railway can in a 2,000 bushel hopper car.

The Grains Group were very concerned about inflation. Which method uses the most labor? Which method uses the most energy?

The per bushel capital cost of the truck is about three times the cost of the rail car. The only reason, Mr. Speaker, that such a suggestion for all this abandonment comes forward at all is because we apply different rules. Different rules for the farmer's labor, different rules for his return on investment to what is applied for the railways. The highway or road is

built by the province, the railway must build its own road and earn a return on the investment.

If we are really going to rationalize our transportation system we must go far deeper than the superficial treatment presented in the Grains Group studies. Members of this House are aware that we have, in Saskatchewan, established a central office on grain-handling and transportation systems. This office is now assessing the costs that will be transferred from railways to farmers through abandonment of branch lines.

The Hon. Otto Lang has said that he would consider compensation to farmers who have added costs put upon them when rail lines are abandoned. It is hard to find much comfort in this, Mr. Speaker, because we recall the shabby treatment of the farm problem proposed through last year's abortive Income Stabilization Plan.

The section in the Grains Group report arrives at a cost of 1/7 of a cent per additional bushel mile or 8.1 cents per additional truck mile. We note their questioning of allowing even a \$2 labor charge for the driver of the truck. Because of this we cannot accept these figures. Based on past experience, we fear that this is what is meant by compensation. I serve notice now that it will not be acceptable. We do not want to see any abandonment until a fair and equitable policy for compensation is agreed upon.

A major study of farm trucking costs has been commissioned by the Agricultural Economics Faculty of the University of Saskatchewan. We hope that this study will reveal more of the characteristics of farm trucking than was brought out by the limited study done for the Grain Group in Manitoba.

We want to know such things as the influence of distance or added distance on the size and age of farm trucks, what commercial truckers are charging for hauling grain, depreciation rates that are fair for farm trucks, the use of farm trucks, and so on. This study, we expect, will be completed by mid-summer 1973. The office is also undertaking a preliminary look at what might be done to give us a more sensible arrangement of the railway system.

We are limited, of course, by the lack of data regarding the railways and their costs. We can calculate or estimate the added cost to farmers, and the added cost to municipalities and the province of the road requirements that would result from abandonment of rail lines. We hope to make realistic appraisals of the effect on communities.

It seems reasonable to suppose that it would be only fair that where a community is rendered non-viable through removal of a rail line, compensation to home owners and businesses would be and should be made available.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I wish to state that it is not the position of this Government that there should be no change in our grain-handling and transportation system. We know that there will be. We know that times and circumstances have changed since the system was built. However, we will insist that before costs are transferred from railways to farmers or community residents that two things be done.

One is that adequate compensation be forthcoming to the farmers and to the communities. Second, is that the abandonments make sense and that the railway system itself be reshaped to give service at the lowest possible cost to all.

Mr. Speaker, because I believe this Resolution, and embodying these two main considerations, be given first priority, I ask for unanimous approval of that Resolution from the Members of this House.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. T.L. Hanson (Qu'Appelle-Wolseley): — Mr. Speaker, it is indeed with great pleasure that I rise to enter this debate on behalf of the people of Qu'Appelle-Wolseley.

This question of rail line abandonment is of vital concern to me and my constituents as we are mainly an area extremely dependent on agricultural production and marketing of those products. We have already lost one rail line which travelled from Wolseley to Wawota and on eastward.

Mr. MacDonald (Milestone): — When did that go?

Mr. Hanson: — Quite a while ago as you are well aware of. The latest report done for the Grains Group shows that abandonment of this line did not have disastrous effects on the communities involved and therefore concludes that further abandonment of lines would have little effect on communities. I say there should be no comparison made between this line and many of the others left unprotected after 1975. To me, Mr. Speaker, it is like comparing chickens with lions.

The line which formerly travelled through Wawota was a light density run and distances from adjacent rail lines never exceeded 10 or 15 miles, thus the alternate delivery point the farmer had to choose meant an extra haul mileage of probably only five to seven miles.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the lines in Qu'Appelle-Wolseley which will be unprotected after 1975, we see a shocking picture. Most serious of all will be the removal of the CP line from Regina to Stoughton, more affectionately referred to as the Dinky Line, which runs parallel to Highway No. 33. This railway is a Class 2 line with a 224,000 pound carrying capacity. In farmers' terms, this means the line is capable of carrying hopper cars with 3,000 bushels of wheat in each. On this line, Mr. Speaker, is a high production area of the Regina Plains, and many high volume delivery points such as Francis, Fillmore, Creelman and Stoughton.

The nearest railways run parallel to it a distance of at least 25 miles either north or south, except for a piece of track running from Weyburn through to Stoughton which travels through the point of Griffin which is approximately 15 miles from Fillmore. This piece of railway is also scheduled for abandonment after 1975. I don't know how the railway officials expect a Class 3 track which can only handle a carrying capacity of 177,000 pounds to handle the volume of grain that is produced in our area along Highway No. 33.

The towns along Highway No. 33 are for the most part still progressive communities and two or three times as large as those along the southern route, which have suffered severe population losses and withdrawal of service facilities. To give a cost to the farmer and losses resulting from the removal of this line, I shall use, Mr. Speaker, another line where estimates are available.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian National Railway has a spur line running south of Peebles through Bemersyde, Corning and on to Handsworth, a total distance of 22.3 miles. Over the last five years the Canadian National has done everything in their power to persuade farmers to use other quota points. The track has not been properly maintained, weeks on end pass without cars being spotted in the winter, and I have heard more excuses and reasons, Mr. Speaker, such as the problems of splitting trains at Peebles and then of synchronizing the diesel units after regrouping the cars that are brought in from the spur. And after consultation with different railway people, I find that the problems that the railways are using to explain their lack of service, to be total hogwash.

These communities, Mr. Speaker, are in severe difficulty now with poor trucking services and maybe they will cease to exist as viable service centres, but what of the farmers involved?

I have here an estimate of the extra trucking costs which will have to be borne by the farmers in the Corning subdivision. Volumes handled last year by the three points were: Bemersyde — 336,000 bushels; Corning — 691,000 and Handsworth — 290,000 bushels, making a total of 1,317,000 bushels to be delivered. This grain is produced by approximately 200 farmers. Using the figure, Mr. Speaker, of 1/3 of a cent per bushel mile which was established for the Grains Group report, and in my opinion somewhat low and an average haul distance of 12 miles they arrived at a net cost to the farmers of approximately \$58,000 per year if the rail line is abandoned. Personally, I would expect the cost to the farmers to exceed \$75,000 per year as the Grains Group figure of 1/3 of a cent per bushel mile did not take into consideration depreciation on the vehicle. We look at a one-ton truck hauling 100 bushels of wheat 12 miles and we find that under their formula it would cost about \$3.96 and I ask you how many commercial truckers will make a 12-mile haul — which is a 24 mile round trip — for approximately three or four cents a bushel. Not too many of them will hire on for that kind of a figure.

Farmers will also have to replace their 1952, or 1942, or 1954, one-ton truck, which was already fully depreciated but served them well to haul two or three miles to Corning. And they will have to replace that truck with a newer two or three ton truck. Also to be considered, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that a very low labor return was considered in the Grains Group figure of 1/3 of a cent per bushel mile.

The researchers felt that farmers delivered grain usually in their slack time. I challenge this assumption especially under the new quota system. I did some quick investigating and found that the breakdown in the grain handled by this area to be approximately 2/3 wheat and 1/3 coarse grains. I, therefore, base my calculations of value of grain handled or to be diverted, at \$1.20 per bushel and find the resulting value at

\$1.5 million. Therefore, the theft or tax to the farmers in this area will amount to either four or five per cent of their gross income, if the rail line abandonment takes place. Using the estimated figure of \$58,185, which was in their report, which will be borne by 200 farmers, we find this amounts to approximately \$300 per farmer per year. This is an insane solution to the railway's problems, if, indeed, they have any problems.

Mr. Speaker, I want everyone in this province to remember that under the Conservative Government, and to a lesser extent the Liberal Government, the railways were given 15 million acres of good land in Saskatchewan, the selection of said property the choice of the railways. This is 15 million acres, at the time of the construction of the railways. That is just about 1/5 of the farm land in this province. They gave the railways this 15 million acres in payment for construction of the railway lines across Canada. This contract should be binding on the railways, as they were paid in full to provide service to Canada and to Saskatchewan, whether at a loss or not.

I should like to relate to the MacPherson Commission on Transportation which was commissioned on May 13, 1959 by the Conservative Government of John Diefenbaker, which started the whole movement towards abandonment of selected rail lines.

Thank Heaven the Pearson Government passed the National Transportation Act in 1967, which stopped further implementation of the abandonment recommendations of the MacPherson Commission until 1975. It is, indeed, interesting to read the reservations of Mr. A.R. Gobeil, who was a member of the MacPherson Commission, but who could not agree with all recommendations, and I refer to pages 78 to 93 in the volume 1 of the report.

In his reservations he expressed the argument that the railways and the government had a binding agreement and could not be amended without agreement by both sides. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, if the railways want to abandon trackage, let them also forfeit an equal percentage of the land back to the provinces concerned.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hanson: — Returning, Mr. Speaker, both physical property and mineral rights. If they want to abandon 35 per cent of the trackage in Saskatchewan, give us back 35 per cent of the 15 million acres of land with all the full mineral rights to compensate our loss. The province can certainly use this revenue to build highways to carry the grains that the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian National don't feel obligated to.

As I have pointed out, Mr. Speaker, the judgments of the Commission and the two old-line parties who support their findings, does not make sense to Western Canadian farmers. Their rationalization scheme displays the rationale of a dog with rabies and the perception of a chicken about to put his head on the chopping block. It is an insane plot that cannot be justified, that we farmers cannot afford, and will not accept.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hanson: — I ask you, Mr. Speaker, do

we, the farmers, get second and third chances to rectify parts of contracts which we feel are disadvantageous to us without the other party having a similar opportunity?

Mr. Speaker, we must now embark on a plan to unite the two railways so that complete co-ordination develops within the system. Then, and only then, can a plan of abandonment be struck, if, indeed, it is ever necessary to remove some lines. Under one administration the railway could sit down with the provincial government involved, elevator companies and most important, the farmer representatives, and design a plan which would utilize the best tracks with the least detrimental effect to the farmer and his community.

May I again mention appreciation to Mr. Pearson's Government for stalling the Conservative recommendation at least until 1975. Mr. Trudeau said, "Why should I sell your wheat?" But at least he agreed to move some grain for us for a couple of years.

What the other Party under Robert Stanfield would have done scares me when we look at the history of the railways development and the politicians and shareholders involved, many of whom were one and the same or closely associated. I say with all sincerity that we New Democrats are the only Party capable of representing Western farmers' interests.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hanson: — Mr. Speaker, I am proud to speak in defence and on behalf of the farmers and townspeople of Qu'Appelle-Wolseley.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hanson: — We cannot sit idly by in our kitchens and take what big brother railway gives us. The time to fight is here. Do not use your alternative delivery point if possible, as this reduces volume and gives them an excuse to withdraw services. I would also urge people in the province to write their MPs and tell them what their stand should be on this subject. 1975 is not far away, Mr. Speaker.

Again, with great pleasure, may I also support and second the motion put by the Hon. Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. H. Owens (Elrose): — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of this most important Resolution.

For a number of years we have been hearing and reading about rail line abandonment as proposed by the railway companies, and which has been stalled until 1975, which is getting mighty close.

My few remarks on this controversy will centre around the area which I have the privilege to represent, the constituency of Elrose, although it will overlap slightly into Rosetown and Kerrobert-Kindersley.

This area of the province, lies north and west of the South Saskatchewan River and Lake Diefenbaker and south of the commonly called Goose Lake Line that runs through Rosetown and Kindersley, and is one of the finest grain-growing areas in Saskatchewan. I will give you some figures in this regard. I hope that you know the area well enough to realize just what will be the result if the railroads are allowed to proceed with their plans.

The Eston-Elrose line is one of the heaviest grain lines in the entire province, yet the CNR calls this a light density line. Mr. Speaker, may I read from page 386 of The Debates and Proceedings of the Saskatchewan Legislature, First Session of 1965. This being a non-political debate, I would record the words of my predecessor from Elrose, George Leith, during debate on rail line abandonment at that time. I am going to quote two paragraphs, Mr. Speaker, on page 386.

Mr. Speaker, Elrose constituency has particular concern regarding the intentions of the railway companies. We are served by two branch lines of the CNR, called the Elrose Subdivision and the Beechy Subdivision. There is also a short branch, of the CPR. We don't know what the intentions of the CPR are, but we do know that the CNR has asked for permission to abandon their lines in Elrose constituency. These proposals are absolutely unthinkable to the people of that area. If the CN lines come out of our area some farmers would have to haul grain at least 36 miles, the cost of which added to the already high cost of farming would be completely prohibitive. Then there are other costs which are not so easily foreseen, but which must be anticipated in abandonment of branch lines. These costs should perhaps be called losses because they will represent the direct and abrupt slashing of property values. Even the elevators that must be moved and the ones that are being moved now will be immediately worth much less if the track beside them is taken up. Businesses and homes will suffer the same overnight depreciation.

This situation is not peculiar to Elrose constituency, it is common to the whole of Saskatchewan if abandonment is allowed to take place on the present terms.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Leith and I may not, in fact we do not agree on a good many issues, but on this particular one we do. Since Mr. Leith has made that speech, the CPR have asked for abandonment of their line in the Elrose area. The total trackage involved CN and CP is approximately 295 miles. This mileage services about 44 delivery points. According to proposed plans this trackage could all disappear and the area included in the Elrose constituency would have one delivery point left on tracks. The grain would need to be hauled mostly to the Goose Lake Line to the north and a small amount crossing the river at Saskatchewan Landing with delivery at Swift Current. Let me give you an approximation of the bushels of grain handled, the present length of haul and the average miles involved under the proposed rail line abandonment plans. The figures are for 1970-71. On the Mildren-McForgan line in that year there were 1,235,000 bushels handled. The present haul is four to five miles, the added mileage from four to eighteen with the added bushel miles 9,931,000. The Eston-Kindersley line 3,625,000 bushels — the

present haul is two to eight miles, the added miles, six to nineteen, with 45,148,000 added bushel miles. On the Juniper-Richlea line 6,785,000 bushels of grain handled, with four to eight miles of haul and added hauling miles six to twenty-four with the added bushel miles 103,421,000. The Tichfield-Beechy line 3,714,000 bushels handled; four to eight mile haul, the added mileage four to forty-four, the added bushel miles, 103,172,000. The Eston-White Bear line 1,942,000 bushels of grain handled, four to seven mile haul, the added miles for hauling twenty-one to forty-eight with added bushel miles 65,513,000. The Gunnworth-Matador line, the grain handled 1,465,000, the present haul four to seven miles, added miles for hauling thirty-four to forty-six, added bushel miles 54,806,000.

These sound like mighty large figures and they are. They need to be recorded in order to consider the extra cost to the farmer. One of the most significant figures is the added bushel miles making a total of 381,991,000. The cost of hauling via truck is not firmly established. You will recall that last fall a test project was carried out with grain (it was barley I think) which was hauled by truck to the government elevators in Saskatoon. The results of this project are not too conclusive evidence of the cost of trucking grain either from an individual farmer or on a commercial basis. But in this case they tell me the costs worked out to approximately one-tenth of a cent per bushel. On that basis the cost to the permit holders for grain delivered to the new designated points from the Elrose constituency would in round figures be \$382,000. If we assume, Mr. Speaker, the figure that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Messer) used in his address of three-tenths of a cent per bushel mile, the figure would be \$1,146,000. I might add that in the test that was used at Saskatoon that this would have to be considered as an ideal hauling situation. All the grain that was picked up in the Saskatoon area and a great many miles would be hauled on either oiled surface or hard surface roads, which would not be the case if it was hauled out of the Elrose area.

Let me further point out that last fall was an ideal and exceptionally good fall for transporting by road. The weather at that time was comparatively dry and continued to stay dry during the time the hauling was being done. We can all recall some seasons when truck transporting would be much more difficult with heavy precipitation and soft road conditions. We must also bear in mind that grain deliveries are on a twelve-month basis and all kinds of weather and road conditions would be encountered.

Another very important aspect of truck hauling is the effect on our road system, whether they be municipal, farm access, grid or highway. Many of these roads and bridges are not built for carrying loads of this type, so the cost of building and maintenance will be extremely high. It is doubtful if the local municipalities could cope with the high cost of road building and maintenance required when we consider the excessive expenditures involved, which I am sure the taxpayers would be unable to bear unless the input from senior governments was greatly increased. It appears that we are faced with a shift of costs to the producer. The railways are endeavoring to slip out and let someone else pick up the tab. Another side effect of hauling grain by truck in such large volume, is that of highway safety, more especially as it pertains to dirt roads and the dangerous dust hazard conditions. It is difficult to realize the potential menace that will be experienced by the travelling public.

I have dealt, Mr. Speaker, only with the monetary aspect of the rail line abandonment program which I feel is not as important in reality as the social aspects. The effects on our smaller towns and our rural community life would be disastrous.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we should take a rational approach to rail line abandonment recognizing that some changes in our style and pattern of grain delivery are inevitable and needed; some rail lines will be rolled up but let us look at the complete picture and plan accordingly, sanely and soundly. The Elrose area, and I am sure many others are similar, just simply cannot allow the withdrawal of railway services as is being proposed in the rail line abandonment program.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members of this Assembly to support this very important resolution.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. A. Oliver (Shaunavon): — Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my support of this Resolution on behalf of the farmers and businessmen of the Shaunavon constituency.

It has been alluded to that the history of the railroad is laced with government subsidy of one form or another. The Federal Government in those days was weak, as it is now. They didn't want to risk being unpopular with the people by building a railroad out West, which was an absolute necessity if the West was going to be developed. The development of the West was rather a dicey issue because there was no economic feasibility study that proved to the Easterners that it was necessary. But this was no excuse for the Federal Government to procrastinate on the issue, they should have taken the initiative and built the railroad and therefore the people of Canada would have had control over it. However, when trouble among the Métis and Indians and white settlers began to get very serious, the Federal politicians seized this opportunity to have someone else build the railroad with the aid of government funds and incentives in the form of land grants, operating guarantees and the like. Then if there was any static they would turn around and say, "Well it wasn't us, it was those bad CPR people etc.". They would have a scapegoat, Mr. Speaker.

The branch lines were built with the idea of service to rural Saskatchewan. This seemed to work out fairly well if you exclude the fact that the freight rates they charged were exorbitantly high. They worked fairly well until the trucking industry appeared on the scene. At about this same time though, the railroad companies found the hotel business very lucrative and began to get into the building of large hotels in a great way all across Canada. It is interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, in the Leader-Post a few days ago, there was an item where the CNR is building the world's tallest building, called the CN Tower in Toronto, it is going to be 1,805 feet high and as the Member for Qu'Appelle-Wolseley (Mr. Hanson) says, all on farmers' money. I agree with that.

It is only natural though that they should follow their private enterprising philosophy and curtail services in rural Saskatchewan, to bolster their hotel business. First, the curtailments began in a very subtle way. The first casualty was mail service. Mr. Speaker, I remember when our little home

town had two trains a day, six days a week. This was on the Shaunavon-Assiniboia line which runs directly through the entire Shaunavon constituency. The mail service was reduced to three times a week and then it was withdrawn altogether. So followed the passenger services and then came the freight problems. Freight was held back until a carload lot was made up, then it was shipped. Since the termination of the passenger and mail service, the local station agents began to disappear. I should just like to mention that the Member for Pelly (Mr. Larson) stated that in his constituency they had hearings, well, no such luck down in our corner. There were no meetings along that line so that the CPR could explain or soften the blow.

The removal of the agents had the effect of freight being set off at any station nearest the actual receiving point. You can well imagine the absolute chaos this created, long delays in freight delivery and losing part or all of the shipment was common. No wonder people started using some other means of transportation. The rail companies said the shipments were inefficient and so explained away their switch to transport trucks. Mr. Speaker, I had a personal experience of this efficiency. Having moved to a new location on the farm, we dug a new well and I ordered, through my local agent, a steel well crib, four feet in diameter, 24 feet long from a firm here in Regina. After waiting two weeks and it didn't arrive, I asked the local agent if he would check it out for me. He did, and said it had been shipped. Confirmation had been received that it had been shipped from Regina via truck. After waiting another week, I got on his back again, and didn't get off until he found out that the cribbing had been shipped out to somewhere between Regina and Aneroid and it got lost. How could a piece of pipe four feet in diameter, 24 feet long get lost on a transport truck? That's efficiency. But this is the type of efficiency, Mr. Speaker, that is really a crucial factor in the decline of services and the depopulation of rural Saskatchewan. There is nothing more galling than to be driving down our highways which often run parallel to railroad tracks and to meet those large transport trucks with the big letters on them, CP. You can meet one truck after another on the highway. But why must such heavy traffic be rolling over our provincial highways when the owners of those trucks also own about half of the railroads in Saskatchewan with road beds that are capable of carrying hundreds of times that of our highways? The tracks have been allowed to deteriorate to the extent that in some parts of Saskatchewan, such as in the Gravelbourg constituency, Neidpath-Burnham section they can only take locomotive traffic when the ground is frozen. These tracks get so badly in need of repair that it is unsafe to use them, so they are abandoned by default and not because their potential use isn't there.

The Premier has alluded to the fact that the Diefenbaker Government inaugurated the MacPherson Commission to study the rationalization of rail lines and related problems. The report was legislated however, by the Federal Liberals, but since an election was close at hand and our Saskatchewan Members, the New Democrats put on such flurry they postponed action. It is obvious that the old line parties are not willing to ruffle the feathers of their corporate friends, but are ready to allow approximately 3,000 miles of track to be torn up, closing up some 800 country elevators.

The Member of Parliament for Swift Current-Maple Creek, while being interviewed on radio not too long ago said, "Well it

was tough, but since they were inefficient they would have to go.” Mr. Speaker, this is the philosophy of the Liberals and Conservatives. As long as they can make a fast buck out of something they could care less about services or the catastrophic effect such as withdrawal of services have on rural life.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Oliver: — The Member for Weyburn (Mr. Pepper) also talked in costs to the rural villages. In our little town of Aneroid, from the facts that I received from the Wheat Pool, the Wheat Pool Elevator alone contributes over \$3,000 to the Aneroid Town council in taxes each year. The large trucks that are in our area, the tandems, do have problems in some of the line company elevators, but since the Pool is owned by farmers they thought about the future and built their elevators for the future so they can now handle these trucks.

Mr. Speaker, the rail line abandonment puts a real problem the laps of the farmers who are farthest away from the delivery point. They have to truck long distances and when a quota is announced, quite often there is such a rush to get the grain to the elevator that the farthest ones away usually are the last ones in and don’t always get their quota in before the elevators are plugged. It is very evident, though, Mr. Speaker, that only the New Democrats are ready and willing to fight to the last man this ridiculous philosophy of inefficiency of the old line parties who are driving the farmers and businessmen out of rural Saskatchewan, those Members opposite who are always bragging that the increase in grain sales is somehow due to the efforts of Otto Lang.

Well, Mr. Speaker, thanks to Otto Lang we are going to have 3,000 miles of track torn up and 800 country elevators closed up also. Well, Mr. Lang and Liberals opposite, the people of Saskatchewan are fed up with your cut-throat philosophy and will register their objections at the coming federal election. Further, I would urge the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Steuart) if he has as much influence on Mr. Trudeau as he would like the Saskatchewan people to believe, to have this ridiculous idea of rail line abandonment dropped and initiate plans to increase services to rural Saskatchewan and not to curtail them. Mr. Speaker, I support the motion.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Wiebe: (Morse) — Mr. Speaker, I must say that it has been a very interesting afternoon. I must mention as well that it has been a very disappointing afternoon. We have heard MLA after MLA stand up on their feet trying to defend their position when they were the government, a position which the only time ever a mile of railroad line was abandoned in this province was when they were the government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiebe: — When they were the government! And they are standing up here this afternoon trying to blame a Liberal government, trying to blame someone else for this terrible thing that happened when they were the government. They realized that they

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were wrong at that time. They are looking for a political issue and we have wasted a whole afternoon . .

An Hon. Member: — With John Burton's speeches.

Mr. Wiebe: — . . hoping that they in turn could justify themselves.

Mr. C.P. MacDonald: — Should have been talking about unemployment.

Mr. Wiebe: — Certainly, we could talk about unemployment. I imagine if we did that we would be called out of order.

Now, Mr. Speaker, going back to the Premier's remarks. He mentioned something about the fact that he wrote the Prime Minister of Canada and he hasn't received an answer for three months. Well, if he has as much concern about what's happening to rail line abandonment that he has to waste a whole afternoon debating it in the House, why didn't he pick up the phone and phone the Prime Minister and say, why haven't I got an answer. Where was his concern? He was looking strictly at some political motive which he could bring into the House.

As well this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, we heard many comments about those terrible Liberals, those terrible Conservatives, and yet how much concern was expressed about the rural way of life? How many were really sincere about this rural way of life? This can certainly be made more clear from the comments made by the Members and the flippant remarks made by the Attorney General (Mr. Romanow). It was basically an afternoon that was motivated for political advantage.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiebe: — As well, there are a few who wanted to get on record back to their own constituencies that they, of course, stood in favor of mother love and this type of thing. Well, talking about mother love is nothing new. If the Members opposite want to talk about mother love, I am willing to spend another whole afternoon talking about mother love.

Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to adjourn the debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:27 o'clock p.m.