

itoba. Three factors especially influenced my own decision to try to learn why:

My hometown of Boissevain's recent decision to quit West-Man. Opposition within our own council in December regarding renewal of a three-year term with that body at a rate of 40 cents per capita. Strong interest generated in various communities by the related Southern Manitoba Regional Analysis Program caravan.

I went to one of four caravan meetings held here recently with as much bias against as for both the R.A.P. project and the corporation. I came away feeling that although undoubtedly some persons dealing daily with statistics, high finance, complex construction projects and commercial enterprises might derive less benefit from such innovations, for the average guy like me West-Man may perhaps offer a much more vital function. Not only does the caravan provide information through various attractive visual media which the man-on-the-street can easily understand, but more significant, it goes beyond assembling and dispensing mere data by generating a co-operative community enthusiasm to quit feeling sorry for ourselves and try instead to do something about improving our communities and regions. Although much has been written about community spirit of Western Canada towns and may well apply to small towns and villages it's vastly more difficult to inspire larger towns (2,000 to 5,000 population) and their surrounding rural areas to become enthusiastic about and cooperate with any one single project.

Some 200 persons attended the four caravan meetings held here. Of the 50 who attended the same evening meeting as I, there was strong support for several constructive suggestions: Wilda Jury's that we capitalize on our natural setting by developing tourist attractions not commonly offered elsewhere, like bob-sledding. Councillor Ross Johnston's that we try harder to develop our own small industries and businesses rather than spend so much money and time trying to attract some huge outside industry to solve all our financial problems. His question "Why should large industries be heavily subsidized while smaller businesses aren't?" was highly thought-provoking. MLA Dave Blake's that people will move to our area if there are jobs available; and, that it's very difficult to attract tourists under existing legislation because of undue distance billboards must be placed from highways, to which information officer Barry Dunsmore replied, "Don't let existing rules deter you." Diane Cooper's that we might attract more tourists by offering free parking space at our beach to campers for their first day. Stan Deardon's that we need an electric motor re-winding plant. Provincial assessor Garry Grant's that there need be no conflict between outside and local investment. Deputy mayor Jim Burgess' that there's something wrong with our provincial policy of offering incentives directly to industries instead of to regions themselves for attracting industries. "What happens, for example," he asked, "if Canada's Manitoba Distillery decides to leave us?" John Bennett's proposal we go beyond producing literature, signs etc. to attract tourists by providing guides--students perhaps--during peak seasons to show people what this district offers.

There was some hostility towards federal government policies of continually phasing out projects in rural Manitoba--Rivers, Gimli, Clear Lake cited as examples--while most new major federal projects--mint cited as most recent--invariably locate in Winnipeg instead of centres like Brandon etc. I recall vividly as student at Boissevain collegiate 22 years ago studying a course in geography which devoted a full chapter to stressing the need for decentralization of industries, military bases, government offices etc. As naive young adult I entered the world of work fully expecting to see such decentralization occur all around me. What I saw instead was Winnipeg mushroom into major metropolitan centre with population rivalling that of the rest of Manitoba (Ag.-Rep. Lin Boyes aptly termed this anomaly "our two provinces"), several rural military bases close while city-based ones grew, and countless similar instances. Don't get me wrong; I don't hate Winnipeg, lived there four years, have friends and relatives there. But no province or state in North America has developed in such ridiculously lop-sided vulnerable manner as ours. As Dave Blake, longtime bank manager, pointed out--when rural Manitoba finally gets involved in a program like A.D.A. (Aid to Designated Areas) which counteracted centralization then Metro Winnipeg soon became part of it (A.D.A. merging with F.R.E.D.) negating any real effect.

The statistics and discussion on farm size increase were especially intriguing. As in most areas farms here have been increasing rapidly in size, the approximate annual percentage increase for surrounding municipalities being: Minto, Odanah, Harrison 6%; Clanwilliam 17%, Saskatchewan 3%. Ross Johnston--long time VLA administrator for this area--brought out an interesting paradox when he indicated that since 1968 small diversified farms here have been considerably more viable than big specialized grain farms.

One major factor many larger Western Canada towns and small cities have to date ignored (unlike their counterparts in Ontario and various US states) is that of zoning a definite