

Nowadays we are well aware of the advantages of urban agglomerations and of the tremendous possibilities offered to men when they live together in vast communities.

However, there is still, and very rightly so, some anxiety about the spectre of a megalopolis. A megalopolis is a conurbation, the type of super-city which is formed when medium-sized cities hundreds of miles from one another start to link up. Urban specialists in Canada see the seeds of a megalopolis in the Toronto-Kitchener-Hamilton-Niagara peninsula. Most Canadian cities can already be considered as autonomous social and political units with their own particular way of living, their communications, their facilities for culture, leisure and education, their labour markets and their internal economy. According to Alan Armstrong, Director General of the Canadian Council for Urban and Regional Research, these centres have practically reached the point of constituting states within a state, on the pattern of a well-known city of ancient Greece.

SIGNIFICANCE OF URBANIZATION

But, how should we view this trend? What is the significance of urbanization in our own Canadian context? I do not wish to sound overly alarmed, nor do I wish to seem to be meddling with something which at first glance seems far removed from my departmental responsibilities, but I do believe that the phenomenon of urbanization calls for urgent and concerted research on a vast scale within an overall strategy. The scale of the research must be vast on account of the very dimensions of the problem; a concerted effort is needed because there is practically no aspect of federal or provincial policies which does not sooner or later have an impact on urbanization, and the results must be brought into an overall strategy because we must make up our minds where we want to go and weigh the consequences of every decision taken by all three of our levels of government. We must bear in mind that the situation has already reached the point where our traditional political structures are threatened with paralysis. If the present trend of city growth continues, Canada will shortly comprise five or six urban centres, surrounded by a desert, or at best by a tundra. The situation calls for quick and efficient action because, at this present moment, no large city in the world can claim to have found satisfactory solutions to the many problems raised by massive concentrations in limited areas: problems of transportation, water pollution, housing, communications and so on. I shall refer to the matter again shortly.

BENEFITS OF AUTOMATION

Just now I was saying that Canada is a prosperous country. I must avoid leaving you with the impression that everyone in Canada has easy access to all the advantages of modern civilization. I will spare you further statistics, but I would like you to remember that, over and above the large numbers of men and women rejected by the labour market on account of age or of inability to learn a new trade, an increasing number of people will be deprived of their jobs as the production of consumer goods is gradually

taken over by machinery. Yes, the term for it is automation. However, the effects of automation are by no means all negative, far from it. Automation is essential to a step-up of production and, in the long-run, added production will shorten the work-week very considerably and, sooner or later, Canadians will have to cope with increasing leisure. I think it is no exaggeration to say that the consequences of the economic and social revolution brought about by automation will be far greater than those of the industrial revolution and of the shift to the cities which followed it.

Are these the only problems we must cope with during the next 30 years in order to be prepared to move into the next century?

Would we be content and rest with easy minds if we were able to come up with satisfactory solutions to the following problems: the rapid growth of our cities; existing social inequality; automation?

I think not, because to believe the contrary would be to hoodwink ourselves and to side with those who only yesterday were treating Canada as a country which did not exist, thus steering her away from truly national objectives....

PIONEER ROLES OPEN TO CANADA

The founding of an organization or of several organizations to study the technical and social changes which will take place in our society would be an excellent way of stimulating the intellectual, spiritual and humanitarian resources which this society will require. This is perhaps a first area in which Canada could play a decisive and worthwhile role, whilst developing its own special character and giving scope to its love of humanity.

There is yet another area in which we might attempt to take a leading role. I am referring to the world of communications, of cybernetics.

We know that machines, robots, will dominate tomorrow's society. The science and techniques of cybernetics are called upon to wield considerable influence over our daily lives. They will play their part in education, industry, the services and government. Let Canadians be pioneers in the field, let us lead the way for others. Fortunately, we are still at an early stage of our development. We can still choose between the highway of technical progress or follow others in the byways of conformity and tradition.

You will have realized how anxious I am that this tremendous growth we are told to expect in the various fields of human endeavour - education, housing, consumption, recreation or transportation - should take place in an environment conditioned by the most recent discoveries and the most sophisticated techniques.

Among these new discoveries and modern techniques, cybernetics holds pride of place and it should be exploited to the limit. But to do this, the nation will have to agree to massive investments in a first-class research institution, whose prime mission would be to explore all the possibilities opened up by these new techniques.

This then is a second area in which, if we hurry, we can show some originality; be a little different....