

The Address—Mr. Nicholson

This government is in the business of handling wheat for our farmers. There is no market for wheat, of course, except such markets as we provide for it, but wheat is an essential commodity for national defence in Canada and for Great Britain. Therefore I say, Mr. Speaker, that this government must without further delay outline a plan to ensure that all necessary foodstuffs be produced and that those producing them will receive a fair return.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

After Recess

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Mr. Speaker, before the six o'clock recess I took occasion to ask a number of questions relating to the position in which, it seems to me, we now find ourselves as a result of the lack of a bold, courageous plan; and I should now like to pose some additional questions, feeling that each one should be answered.

First, what is the policy with regard to the production of automobiles, trucks and buses in Canada? According to a press statement a new automobile contains, on the average, about 1,700 pounds of steel, 500 pounds of iron, 60 pounds of copper, 20 pounds of aluminum, 70 pounds of cotton, and 15 pounds of wool, with a few pounds of glass. The latest statistics supplied by the bureau of statistics present an alarming study of the increase in the production of passenger automobiles for domestic use. Here are the figures of sales, month by month, in the years 1939, 1940 and 1941:

	1939	1940	1941
January	4,795	6,738	5,727
February	4,507	7,780	6,728
March	7,998	10,481	11,272
April	14,255	15,453	16,082
May	14,334	16,646	10,170
June	8,620	12,604	8,108
July	5,826	4,542	6,306
August	3,672	2,755	4,333
September	4,948	3,572	3,785
October	5,682	4,827	3,879
November	7,613	7,616	3,385
December	7,804	8,775

The statistics for December, 1941, are not available.

I should like to draw the attention of the house to the following increases in the early months of 1940 compared with 1939: January, 40 per cent; February, 72 per cent; March, 31 per cent; June, 46 per cent. It is true that the later months of 1941 showed a decrease, but the total number produced in the first eleven months of last year is given as 79,775, compared with 93,014 in the first eleven months of the previous year.

[Mr. Nicholson.]

In peace time I am enthusiastic about having an automobile in every garage. But in a war of machines I think it is unfortunate that so many skilled mechanics and so much valuable material should be utilized in the production of automobiles for pleasure. The production of trucks and buses has been increased; in the first eleven months of 1941, 32,218 were produced, compared with 26,618 in the corresponding period of the previous year. I know it can be argued by those who are selling these commodities that they have sales staffs to maintain and factory workers to pay, and that they cannot very well be expected to sacrifice their organization. But a plan which will include the entire country should be taken into consideration. Every mechanized unit possible should be supplied to our forces; we cannot continue to drift along using such a large volume of material in these non-essential industries. Last summer, while travelling on the train which goes from Saskatoon to Edmonton, I was told that every day of the week there is a large bus which runs on practically the same schedule as the train. On the day I was travelling there would have been no difficulty in accommodating on the train all the bus passengers. Surely we must not leave it to individual bus companies to decide whether theirs is essential work or not. There must be planning of necessary transportation in Canada. The production of the equipment necessary to transport our people must be carried on, but we should not have any unnecessary manufacture of buses or trucks or automobiles when the materials used in their production are needed for other purposes.

Then I should like to ask, what is our policy with regard to housing our people? I have discussed this subject on several occasions in the house. In my opinion we have here a problem which so far has not received the consideration it deserves. I raised the question when the house met here last November and the Minister of Munitions and Supply (Mr. Howe), in whose department the appropriations for war-time housing are made, stated, regarding the situation in Winnipeg, which I had mentioned in passing:

Winnipeg was a city where there were many vacant houses. I suppose before the war there was no city which had as large a number of vacant houses as had Winnipeg. I have heard of no shortage there, but if a shortage occurs we will meet it.

I understand that, following this statement by the minister, there were some unfavourable comments from Winnipeg; an official of Wartime Housing Limited was sent to Winnipeg to find out what was the situation, and one of the directors of Wartime Housing in Winnipeg said that Winnipeg did not have