

*The Address—Mr. Balcom*

never be able to leave harbour. All the airliners which zoom over the Atlantic would be grounded were it not for the plodding tankers which they pass en route. The loss of our merchant marine would reduce us to the status of a second-rate nation depending on other countries for our protection, for we would control no means of supplying our forces overseas or of conveying our saleable goods to their markets.

I should like to bring before the house and the government two matters which in a sense have a personal flavour, but which are in fact important to the proper representation of the people in the House of Commons.

First, the matter of office accommodation has bothered me greatly since I came here in 1950. I find myself in hearty agreement with the words of the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Ferguson) speaking in the house last year, when he described as scandalous the office conditions that the people's representatives are asked to put up with in the House of Commons. During last session I shared an office with one of the most able and industrious members in the house. A better personal relationship could hardly be found, but I am sure he shares my sentiments in regard to the conditions that prevail. Between visitors, telephone calls, and delegations visiting one or other of us, not to mention office routine, concentrated thought was out of the question in a normal working day. That meant, in addition to the 9 a.m. to midnight round of activities, one had to find additional time to do work which had to be done in comparative quiet. Under these conditions it is virtually impossible to give proper service to a constituency and especially when that constituency is the largest in Canada and naturally, you will all agree, the most important.

The second problem, which is of particular moment because of the location of Ottawa in relation to Halifax, is the time required in travelling. I am sure those who live considerable distances from Ottawa, both east and west, must find this a hardship. I believe it would be in the public interest for the government to provide for transportation by air for members while the house is in session. Travelling by plane on passes should cover only journeys between Ottawa and one's constituency and should perhaps be limited to the period when the house is in session.

Mr. Speaker, one of the special problems concerning the people of our constituency, by virtue of its strategic position, is civil defence. Halifax city, Dartmouth and the surrounding communities constitute a target area. This has been recognized, and special

efforts have been made toward civil defence. The city has a civil defence co-ordinator, and a great deal of useful work has been done in Halifax, but at considerable expense to the city.

Disaster is no respecter of city or municipal boundaries. The need for protection extends to the congested suburban areas, and even beyond. But those communities are not in a position either to operate or to finance an efficient civil defence service. The federal government has gone some distance in recognizing the national character of the problem, but has not gone far enough. Success of the civil defence program depends upon widespread public interest and support. For, as the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) has said, voluntary effort is its real foundation. This voluntary effort must be translated into action on a community basis.

Many of the elements of an adequate program are services which are the responsibility of local government—services such as health welfare and protection. The province, too, provides facilities such as highways and traffic control, which are part of the pattern. It is proper that the responsibility for these should remain where it is, and for the overwhelming majority of communities the extension and co-ordination of these are adequate for any likely eventuality.

But what of the target zones, where extraordinary precautions have to be taken? In the Halifax-Dartmouth area the civilian population is subjected to more than ordinary wartime hazards. Witness the explosion in the harbour in 1917, when some 2,300 people were killed; and again at the Bedford magazine in 1945. Should not protection from such catastrophes be more than local or provincial responsibilities? I would strongly urge the government to make provision for the special needs of target areas, without requiring equal financial participation of provinces or municipalities. Such arrangements would involve co-ordination by federal authority of the services of all three governments, as well as the marshalling of the voluntary effort.

It seems sensible, from a practical standpoint, as well as in terms of moral responsibility, to establish the civil defence program for these target areas on the basis on which it will operate—that is, in conjunction with the military arm. A considerable financial obligation would thereby be removed from the local and provincial governments, an obligation which in five provinces has apparently gone by default, with a consequent absence of provision for catastrophe in these