

*The Address—Mr. Howe*

The next paragraph is very profound:

The three-year study by an eight-scientist commission under Dr. B. N. Smallman of Queen's University, Kingston, says agriculture is still "the most important primary industry in Canada" and research is largely responsible for its success.

I see the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) applauding because the leader of this commission is from Kingston. Those of us from agricultural areas have always felt that the prospering of most nations depended on the top six inches of the soil. We feel it should not have taken an eight-scientist commission three years to determine that agriculture is still the most important primary industry in Canada. For that reason, I am critical of the government because there was not more said in the Speech from the Throne on ways and means to improve agricultural processes and procedures in this nation. The article continues:

However, an increasing degree of specialization has resulted in an inadequate communications system among researchers and with farmers.

Dr. P. D. McTaggart-Cowan of Ottawa, executive director of the science council, says the Smallman report's conclusion may seem controversial to some but should serve as "a useful starting point for informed public debate" on agricultural research.

Was anything mentioned about agricultural research in the Speech from the Throne? After sitting for three years, an eight scientist commission presented a report, but this matter is not referred to in the Speech from the Throne. If agriculture is going to maintain a position of importance in the years to come to assist in feeding the many millions of people who need to be fed, improved agricultural research programs must be given more consideration. In the field of marketing, crop specialization, animal husbandry and practically all other fields of agriculture there is room for a great deal more research in order that agriculture will continue to be the most important primary industry in our nation.

I sincerely hope that as this session proceeds legislation will be introduced regarding marketing programs that are necessary. We hope this legislation will be better drafted than previously so that it will not be so difficult to bring it to completion in this House and in committee.

I hope the Minister of Finance will give consideration to ensuring that farmers can get the farm improvement loans they require. There has been some reticence on the part of the banks to providing the farm improvement loans that many farmers require. They would rather lend the money on their own terms. I ask the minister to do his utmost to see that this money is readily available for those who need it.

There are many other fields to which continued thought should be given. This government has received adequate assistance. There have been commissions, the task force on agriculture and the Barber Commission on farm machinery, as well as the commission on research to which I have made reference. Many people are working to find ways and means to assist the government. I hope the government applies some of the programs and suggestions of the commission.

[Mr. Howe.]

The hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) intimated that little had been done as a result of the Barber Commission report which indicated that Canadian farmers should be able to get their farm machinery and replacement parts at lower prices than are presently being charged.

I intend to use the rest of the time available to me to mention two or three matters applicable to my own constituency to which I have referred on many occasions. The first matter is the building of post offices. I am happy the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Laing) is in the chamber tonight. He has given very kind consideration to the post office in the village of Elora. About two years ago, the post office authorities in Elora decided that they wanted more space, more modern facilities, and decided to tear down the old post office building, find a new site and build a new post office. We must remember that there are communities in this nation that are not so ready to brush off the old and take on the new, but Elora is one of them.

● (9:30 p.m.)

The reason for this is that Elora is a beautiful community. The Elora rocks have always been an outstanding tourist attraction for people passing through or staying in the vicinity. Many of the homes in Elora were built of limestone, and they are beautiful structures. This is the case with the existing post office. The building is an asset to Main Street. It is a landmark and is as strong and sturdy as the day it was built. With some renovation, changes and additions, I feel, along with an outstanding architect who has looked into the subject, that it is not necessary to destroy this beautiful old post office in order to erect one of these new match box buildings the Post Office Department favours today, which are rarely things of beauty no matter where they are sited.

The people of Elora rose up in arms and presented petitions to me, to the Postmaster General (Mr. Côté), and Minister of Public Works, (Mr. Laing). I have been very happy that the Minister of Public Works has been able to hold back his people, so nothing has yet been done. I sincerely hope that the plan the people of Elora would like to see implemented, which is the retention of the old post office building after renovating it and improving its facilities, is the plan adopted. I hope also that the Minister of Public Works, as he promised me, will some day go to Elora to see the post office building.

The second matter I want to bring to the attention of the House is one I referred to last April and have spoken about innumerable times in this House. I refer to the attitude of the Canadian National Railways to the passenger service which it provides in a great many areas in Canada. When I spoke about the matter in this House last April, I said that except for Newfoundland we in this part of western Ontario felt that we were being used as guinea pigs, since the second application that had been made to the Canadian Transport Commission to reduce passenger service related to this area.