

nation with so much food that we cannot use, I hope we will be able to find some way of using these resources to the benefit of people throughout the world who are starving.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, may I say I believe that the twenty eighth parliament will truly meet the high expectations of the people of this country. I sincerely hope and pray that God will guide us in our deliberations so that we too will learn as a nation to give to others as God has so generously given to us.

• (12:40 p.m.)

**Mr. Cliff Downey (Battle River):** Mr. Speaker, as a new member participating in the proceedings of this house I am deeply impressed by the high regard in which Your Honour is held by members on both sides of the house and by the genuine pleasure with which Your Honour's re-election as Speaker was welcomed. I add my congratulations to those already extended to Your Honour. I also congratulate the Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Chairman of committees and all those who have been appointed to discharge heavy burdens of responsibility as ministers of the crown or parliamentary secretaries.

May I also congratulate the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson) on his appointment as Minister of Agriculture. I feel he is well qualified for his post and I hope in the future to work with him in order to solve some of our problems to our common advantage.

My constituency, Battle River, is primarily devoted to Agriculture and its related industries, and I know that when one rides over the prairies, watches the snow drift like sand and listens to the coyotes howling at night it is possible to divorce oneself from the reality of the times. I think it is also possible to divorce oneself from reality in this House of Commons by reason of the clash of conflicting personalities or some members' search for personal acclaim. In our questions and debates we must remember, surely, that the four parties represented in this house are striving for the same end, the betterment of the life of all the people of this nation. We differ only in the means to that end.

The people of my constituency are perhaps not overly concerned about the political stripe of their federal representative in Ottawa. On the other hand, they are very much concerned about their livelihood, about the mortgages on their farms and about their mounting debts, as well as about the diminishing net return they obtain for their produce.

### *The Address—Mr. Downey*

For years governments and economists have told farmers to become more efficient, and the farmers have answered this call. In 1949 the cost of the wheat in a loaf of bread was slightly over 3 cents; in 1967 that cost was a shade over 3 cents, and in 1968 it may be even less. How many in Ottawa today realize that if the farmer gave his wheat away a loaf of bread would still cost 26 cents?

The productivity of the worker in agriculture is far higher than the productivity of the worker in any other segment of our economy, with the result that the percentage of our net income which goes to feed us is today smaller than it has been at any time in our history. Canadian farmers have continued to sell their wheat at agreed world market prices at a time when almost all other wheat exporting countries have paid their wheat producers a support price.

When it comes to the manufactured goods that we sorely need and must buy if we are to become more efficient, we buy those goods at extremely high prices, in part brought about by the organizational strength of big business and labour. Tariffs protect industry, and we bear the expense; labour unions increase their demands and are given what they ask, largely at our expense. When we complain we are told to become more efficient. I ask the Prime Minister, where is our place in the just society?

When we examine figures that are available and look at the capitalization of the average farm, it appears that farmers as a class are fairly wealthy. I say that it is little consolation to live your life in poverty and die in affluence. Farmers are showing an increase in net worth only because land values have gone up, partly because of inflation and partly because more people are on this planet.

Many believe that the answers to problems facing farmers and businessmen are to be found by making money available cheaply by way of farm improvement loans, cash advances through the Farm Credit Corporation, and so on. Some ask, does that sort of thing not prolong the agony? For the good, efficient operators, yes, cheap money may be the answer. But it can also be a trap for the unwary and those unskilled in the use of capital. I ask, is there any point in forcing all but the exceptionally efficient operators off the farm? Men must live somewhere, and a problem farmer may well become a problem city dweller.