

*The Address—Mr. Balcom*

authority. The formation of the Dominion of Canada was in many ways an act of faith. The political and ethnic balance which now prevails has given us a good foundation for growth, but I fear that the spectacular expansion of the past 15 years has given us delusions of grandeur. Many Canadians and many outside Canada seem to have become mesmerized by the idea of bigness. We tend to overlook the nature of our growth, with a thin line of people stretched across a continent and large concentrations of population only in a relatively few centres. Many forget that there are reasons for this sparse settlement. Perhaps I should qualify this by saying that we who live in the coastal provinces are keenly aware of some of the costs of nationhood. The problem of transportation alone is almost overwhelming.

To get back to the main point, suppose business conditions should take a sudden turn for the worse? Suppose United States capital stopped flowing into the development of Canadian resources? How would we keep up our standard of living? The truth is that as a trading nation we are very vulnerable. Our exports are still largely primary products, with a few commodities making up the bulk of the value. Our population is scattered and already divided into two major language groups. Can we risk the addition of a large number of citizens with quite different backgrounds and loyalties from our two major groups? The existence of pockets of people whose Canadianism has not had a chance to take root and mature could be a grave threat to our political stability in time of emergency, either domestic or external. What is more, I question whether we are entitled to tackle with such wild abandon the development of our resources.

We think of Canada as a very large country, and so it is; but the supply of arable land, for example, is not inexhaustible. In fact we are told by our agricultural scientists that Canada will soon be importing more food products than she has exported. This day will be hastened if immigration and natural increase continue at the same high rate.

As to our mineral resources, may I refer you to the proceedings of the annual meeting of the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. The retiring president, Dean A. E. Flynn of the Nova Scotia Technical College told the engineers in attendance that they had a stewardship to protect the country's natural resources and the time was right now. I agree wholeheartedly with that. These facts suggest that the conservation of our resources should be receiving very serious

study. It should certainly be taken into account in determining a desirable level of immigration for Canada.

There are other ways in which we can help to relieve the pressure of population on other areas. Canada has made a creditable contribution to the Colombo plan. The announcement regarding the proposed increase in our contribution will be welcome, and we should perhaps extend ourselves further in this program. To assist in the creation and enlargement of productive capacity in countries less developed than our own will accomplish more in the long term to raise the standard of living of the world's needy people than immigration can.

Another avenue we can pursue is in the direction of freer trade. Led by an able and farsighted Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe), Canadian delegations have worked hard for the removal of trade restrictions. We have responsibilities in this regard, and the government is to be commended for its resistance to the special interests which from time to time seek increased protection from foreign competition. We have too much at stake in the enlargement of world trade to risk such action. Our fish, iron ore, lumber and wheat must be sold on the world market, and we must buy on that market if it is to remain strong and flexible.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is one subject which is close to my heart and that is housing. As we look forward into 1955 there are many encouraging things to think about. One of the most gratifying signs of progress in the current business picture is the increase in home building. I am sorry to say, though, that according to reports in our local press, the *Halifax Mail-Star*, dwelling construction in Halifax in 1954 was considerably below that of 1953, although the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation has been most cooperative in promoting the construction of homes.

It was only through the good offices of our own Minister of Public Works (Mr. Winters) in starting the new federal building for Halifax late in December that our construction figures kept even close to those of the previous year. I am not satisfied that all is being done that can be done, particularly by the municipalities. Quite apart from the significance of the increase in home building as a sign of prosperity is its meaning in terms of the well-being of our people, and there is still a great gap to be filled.

At the last census the average earnings of male wage and salary workers in Halifax county were between \$2,000 and \$2,500 a year.