

*The Address—Mr. Balcer*

government should go ahead and help, if not build the bridge itself, at least do its share and help the municipalities concerned in order to settle this problem as early as possible.

We learned recently that the channel in the St. Lawrence would remain open the whole winter and that the Department of Transport intended to have three icebreakers do the work. Well, to my mind, it would be a worthwhile endeavour and the Department of Transport should tell us precisely what its intentions are in this regard. The news, such as given in the papers, seemed to imply that it would be merely a matter of keeping the river free from ice, but nothing was said about keeping navigation going during the whole winter. At any rate, the population of Three Rivers would be very happy if navigation was carried on twelve months a year. It seems to me that Three Rivers could become an important factor in the economic development of the country during the winter season, for today one of the main problems this country has to face is that of selling hundreds of millions of bushels of wheat, which our western farmers cannot market. I do think that the problem partly arises out of difficulties we are having in shipping this wheat out of the country. If the St. Lawrence river were opened to navigation the whole year round, harbours like Three Rivers, Quebec, Montreal and Sorel would be of great use to the other provinces, for they would help them to send abroad the wheat surplus they had this year and which will probably occur again during coming years.

The only people protesting on this account were the tomcod-fishermen. In the Three Rivers district, we have an entirely local product, which is the tomcod. It would be a real pity if tomcod fishing were to disappear forever. In any case, the country's interest should come first, and I trust the government will agree to compensate the tomcod fishermen, at least partially, for the serious losses they will suffer after the channel is opened.

When hearing me ask the government to build a bridge over the St. Lawrence, at Three Rivers, I imagine some followers of the government will say that as an opposition member who spent part of the summer criticizing the government for levying too heavy taxes it is somewhat inconsistent to come forward and ask for further expense.

The fact that the government is piling up each year surpluses amounting to many hundreds of millions and, in spite of the criticisms

[Mr. Balcer.]

voiced by various organizations and newspapers in the country about the high level of taxation, that it brings down a budget which in effect maintains and even increases the taxes, means that it is wallowing in wealth.

It will be advanced that the government applies those surpluses to the reduction of the national debt; the argument is rather weak because I deem it unfair to saddle one single generation with the burden of the full national debt. The reimbursement of the national debt should be distributed, fairly, over many generations and the present government has no right to collect more money than it needs for a reasonable administration of the business of the country.

I believe that the federal government must not be the only one to look after the development of the country and to undertake large scale public works. However, experience shows that the government rather frequently meddles into matters which are none of its business. But it can help by doing certain works in the district of Three Rivers as well as looking after the construction of a railroad on the north shore, which has become of vital importance.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, that part of Quebec, and more particularly in the north and in that part of the province all along the north shore, has known an extraordinary and unprecedented development. I am of the opinion that the government should also do something there by building a railroad that would help to develop that part of the province and the province as a whole, while encouraging industrialists, who are spending hundreds of millions of dollars in order to work, in an advantageous and rational way, the natural resources of Quebec. All those are works of national importance and the government should do its share.

I said a moment ago that municipalities are experiencing financial difficulties and that it was not easy for them to undertake a comprehensive program of public works. That is not the only field in which municipalities are experiencing difficulties. As a matter of fact, the financial situation of the municipalities is so precarious that they are forced to take steps to curb house building within their own limits.

There is nobody in this country who does not favour a vigorous housing policy and the announcement in the speech from the throne to the effect that the government