

*The Address—Mr. C. Douglas*

people of the riding will certainly have much to contribute in the not too distant future in supplying the needs of not only Canadian citizens but of citizens around the world as far as farm production is concerned. With this in mind, I hope that the government of Canada some time in the near future will take steps to see that young people are given encouragement and, indeed, much financial assistance, not only to remain on the farm but for many of them to return to the farms on which they made their way.

● (1700)

I am unhappy to report, as are many others from rural ridings, I am sure, that one of the prime exports of rural ridings throughout this country is our most prized possession resource—the young people of the riding. The young people are leaving these areas. They cannot get what they need there, so they leave. They leave to seek higher education in urban centres and, I am very sad to say, not too many of them return but look elsewhere for business and professional opportunities. With the help of the government of Canada and the members of this House, I hope we can provide these fine young men and women, not only of my riding but of many rural areas throughout Canada, with the opportunity, the encouragement and the financial assistance that would see them return to their homes and back to the land and the agricultural profession upon which we all depend so greatly.

Without the return of the young people back to the land of their forefathers in the not too distant future, the outlook for not only providing food staples for our own consumption but, most definitely, food staples for much of the world, will be in bad straits. The demand is growing year after year throughout the world for production of food. Without the young people on the farm—and our farm population is much beyond middle-age; much of it quite elderly—I am very sad to say that our production of food will be seriously curtailed, if not diminished to the point of starvation and we will be faced to a greater extent with the plight of so many in today's world.

We must all realize that there are many causes of war. People have listed hundreds of them. When you get right down to it, the one thing that will cause any person to fight is the threat of starvation. Such an individual will fight you before he starves. So we must get young people back on the farm. We must give them that opportunity. We must give them a fair return on their capital investment and the time they spend on the farm. We must also bear in mind that without a fair return on investment, no young person—indeed, no one—will return to or remain on the farm if his cash reserves dwindle and disappear, finding himself, for want of a better word, rich in possessions when he is dead.

Therefore, not only would an improvement in the transportation system benefit the farm population of my riding; it would also be of great advantage to the tourist industry—and the tourist industry is of prime importance to the riding of Bruce. Many of the people in that area depend heavily upon tourism for their livelihood, and without an upgrading of facilities and provision of proper transportation, many of them will find that they, too, must soon go elsewhere to continue their occupation and earn their livelihood. It is of the utmost importance, at least for my riding in Ontario—and, I might add, for many ridings such

[Mr. Douglas (Bruce).]

as mine throughout the country—that the problems of transportation be given high priority for action by the government of Canada.

I should like to divert just for a moment from my prepared text and speak primarily to those who, like myself, are new members of parliament. Since arriving here, many people have asked whether this is really all worth while, and what I can do as a backbencher. Much has been said of a backbencher, his thoughts and feelings. A former member, Gordon Aiken, wrote a very good book about the backbencher. If I might leave one message with my fellow backbenchers, it is this. Look around this House of Commons, and what do you see? We are all representatives of the people because we are the people of Canada from sea to sea and from north to south. We in the back benches and in the front benches represent every race, creed and colour. We are represented here by individuals with the prefixes Mr., Mrs., Miss and Ms. Some have a background of farming, of mining, fishing, lawyers and, yes, Indian chiefs as well. This is why we are important as backbenchers: we are the people of Canada. I think this is of importance to the government of Canada and it is why it is important for us to be members of this House.

If there is one aim for this government over the next few years—however long we are to be here—it should be to bring together the people of Canada. We, the representatives of the people of Canada, are divided on many occasions, as this country is divided, and it seems to me a shame that only in time of war do all the people of a land come together with a common goal. Perhaps we should soon realize that we are at war. Instead of the front lines being many thousands of miles away over the seas, our battles are being fought right here. Our battle is between democracy and democratic government and those ideals that would be forced upon us by others—government without the benefit of the vote, without the benefit of elections and without the benefit of membership in such a body as this House of Commons. We, as members, must realize that we are the front line soldiers and the people of the world look to us to see how, and why, democracy can, and does, work so well.

At the present time Canada is in an extremely fine position. It is a country in which democracy has worked, and worked properly. As a result of the unfortunate incidents which have occurred south of the border in recent years, I think now more than ever the people of the world will look to this country for leadership, for the right approach of government and for the association of people with the government. As a backbencher here, may I say that is why I feel it is such an honour to be part of this august body of legislators. We are in the front lines of the battle for freedom, and we have the opportunity to express our aims during this thirtieth parliament. We should all work toward uniting this country.

To those in the back benches who perhaps look to the cabinet and see people of high renown, let me say that those in the front benches should look back; they sit up front because we sit behind. Finally, I might say to hon. members on both sides of the House, at times the process of government has been likened to the action of a turtle. That is certainly not one of the fastest animals in the world but one, in the words of Aesop's fable, that slowly