

The Address—Mr. A. B. Douglas

where else in the world. We hope that wise counsel will continue to prevail on both sides of that boundary so that we can continue to set this remarkable example of peaceful coexistence to the rest of the world.

My area is predominantly rural, with rich farm land and ranching country prevailing in most parts. We do have some unique areas which may soon be incorporated into a prairie grasslands national park. Such a park would preserve for posterity some of the great expanse of our prairie landscape in its original state, and I hope that further progress toward the establishment of such a park, in co-operation with the Saskatchewan government, will be made this year.

Agricultural production includes wheat, barley, oats, flax and many other field crops. There is increasing interest in an already thriving cattle industry, and more land is being seeded each year for pasture and forage. Large numbers of hogs, sheep and poultry are produced, and there are some fine dairy herds as well. I was pleased to note in the Speech from the Throne references to programs to improve market potential for farm products. As you know, Mr. Speaker, and as we were reminded in the Throne Speech this morning, the market for grain has improved greatly, and the outlook is for a continuation of a good demand for grain for the next year or two at least.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia): While this happy development may be partially due to world conditions, much of the credit must go to the government for the sincere interest they have demonstrated in the welfare of the grain industry. The wheat board, with the very valuable addition of Mr. Charles Gibbings as a commissioner on July 1, 1969, with the encouragement of many members of Parliament, and under the direction of Saskatchewan's cabinet minister, has done an outstanding job of seeking out and developing grain markets. As time goes on I think we will be able to appreciate even more the tremendous effort that was expended in so successfully reviving Canada's grain industry by the present Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Lang), who still retains his responsibility for the Canadian Wheat Board. It was a stroke of genius when the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) gave a prairie cabinet minister the task of building up our great grain industry to the exclusion of any other duties for nearly a year. He has really done a remarkable piece of work, and this has been recognized, and perhaps rewarded, by the addition of more responsibilities.

While prairie people are pleased to see this recognition, there is a widespread feeling that the grain industry is of sufficient importance to merit the undivided interest of a cabinet minister, and I express the hope that this will be taken into account in the course of some future re-organization in the government.

Other important factors contributing to the improved grain markets are the granting of even more generous credit terms to our customers by the government, and by a continuous expansion of our food aid programs. We hope that the foreign policy review referred to in the

[Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia)]

Speech from the Throne will include further development of these forward-looking policies.

Mention was made in the Throne Speech of measures to assist in the adjustment to changes which have been going on and will continue to take place in Canadian agriculture. I hope that such plans will be advanced by the second Canadian congress on agriculture which will be held here in Ottawa late next month. The first Canadian congress on agriculture was convened by the government in March, 1969, and it was the first time in history that a national meeting sponsored by a federal government had ever been called to discuss national agricultural problems and to attempt to define long term policy. The November congress could mark the beginning of a bright new era for the farming industry.

With regard to assistance to farmers in the adjustments that face us, we need programs to assist small farmers to attain economic units, or to retrain for other work if that is what they wish. For older farmers who are on small units there should be a plan to permit them to retire with dignity, and to continue to live on the farm if they prefer. The average realized net farm income in Canada, which is the actual take home pay, was less than \$3,400 per farm last year, which means that most small operators had an even smaller income. Far less than half of the farmers in Canada earn enough to make them subject to income tax. Therefore most small operators will not have had sufficient income in recent years to make the Canada Pension Plan meaningful to them.

Because of the hardships and uncertainties in farming, especially on the Prairies, relatively few young people have entered the industry in the past 20 or 30 years. As a result, the average age of farmers in the west is well over 50 years. I hope that farm policies will be such as to make agriculture more attractive to young people.

We have in Canada one of the most efficient farm industries in the world. Agricultural output per person engaged in the industry increased 11 per cent in 1969. Each year Canadians have been spending a declining portion of their incomes on food, and each year the farmer's share of the food dollar goes down as a greater share is taken by the food processors and handlers. If we in this country wish to have a plentiful supply of good food at reasonable prices, we must adopt farm policies that will keep agriculture healthy and in the hands of capable owner-operators, a system which has amply demonstrated its efficiency.

One of the disadvantages under which farmers operate, especially in the grain growing areas, is extreme variability in income. For instance, the total realized net farm income in Saskatchewan in 1966 was \$465 million. In 1967 it was \$484 million, in 1968 it was \$367 million, and last year at was \$199 million. I hope that the programs to assist in adjustments to change in the industry mentioned in the Speech from the Throne will include a farm income maintenance plan to help smooth out these income swings which are causing so much hardship and worry to grain producers.

It appears that we may be approaching another period of expansion, and now would be a very appropriate time to initiate a plan to stabilize and maintain farm incomes