

*The Address—Mr. Wright*

What happens when a country exports more than it imports? If the United States and Canada continue to export more than they import, and refuse to bring back goods to Canada for those exports, they accumulate pounds and francs in Europe. The only good those pounds and francs can be to us is for purposes of investment in the industries or resources of Europe. That was the procedure in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries, with the result that some of the exporting nations owned the basic resources of many other countries.

That has happened right here in Canada. We have imported more from the United States than we have exported to that country; and as a result of the accumulation here of dollars owned by Americans we find that about 50 per cent of our basic resources are owned by Americans. The condition is not so bad in Canada; we know the Americans. They are our neighbours and our friends; and we can trust them. But let me tell you this, that the people of Europe are not going to trust the people of North America who will come in there and attempt to own the basic resources of Europe—their railroads, their power sites, their manufacturing plants. And if the United States or Canada believes it can carry on on that basis, it is in for a disappointment—and it is not because there is no market for our goods.

The food and agricultural organization tells us that only one-fifth of the people of the world have a reasonable standard of living. Today we have a surplus of food, but that surplus is only in areas where production has been high, while in areas where the purchasing power is low there is still a great need for food.

Here is what the food and agricultural organization has to say:

However, the total supply of food available comprises only part of the picture. Availability per person is another major factor. The world's population has been increasing, and at different rates in different regions. These population increases, over the eleven-year period 1936 to 1947, vary from 3.5 per cent in Europe to over 24 per cent in Latin America. As a result, per capita food supplies have fallen more rapidly, compared with pre-war, than absolute quantities of food produced.

I do not think we will ever reach the point where there is hope for peace as long as there are surpluses of food in one section of the world and starvation in another. We must devise ways and means of distributing the wealth that can be produced on the North American continent. Unless we do that we will find ourselves in the same position as in 1936 and 1937. How did Hitler get the courage to try to conquer the world? He believed the democracies were too weak to resist him, that they could never get together.

[Mr. Wright.]

At that time we were in a depression, we had millions of unemployed, and he thought we were weak.

Exactly the same situation will develop in the world again unless the democracies get together to solve some of these problems of distributing the tremendous productive capacity of the North American continent. This is needed for the development of Asia and India and the Middle East. We must find some method, barter or otherwise, to distribute our production. If we cannot do it in one way, then we must find some other way. There is no ground for the fear of overproduction. In my opinion, we can never really overproduce in this world.

What about our own country? Have we reached maximum consumption here? I do not think we have. I do not know what most people think, but I cannot help thinking of the old age pension of \$30 per month that is paid by the dominion government. Some of the provinces pay supplementary amounts of \$5 or \$10, but mostly there is a means test attached. Out of that money these people must pay rent and clothe and feed themselves. Yet we have sufficient production to give them a better standard of living. It does not make common sense to me. I do not think we have nearly reached our consuming capacity in this country.

What about housing? We need probably 150,000 to 200,000 new houses this year every one of which will require furniture, kitchen equipment and all the things needed to furnish a home. There is a market for the tremendous production of this country, but apparently we cannot build houses. What about the war veterans allowances? This government is paying \$30 per month to men who fought in the first year, an amount even lower than the old age pension. Some of the provinces supplement the old age pension, but the dominion government cannot even match that as far as the war veterans allowances are concerned.

Certainly there is a market for what can be produced in this country. I could go on indefinitely referring to groups of people in Canada who could consume more if they had the necessary purchasing power. We have the wealth to distribute; why not do the sensible thing? Why have a depression when there is a market for our goods, both at home and abroad? It does not make common sense.

We could undertake a tremendous construction program. I was astonished the other day when figures were tabled in reply to a question asked by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggarr (Mr. Coldwell). They showed that the government had on the shelf a program that would give employment, on the job and off the job, to some 40,000 additional workers.