

*The Address—Mr. Coldwell*

that various public projects should be planned and undertaken to safeguard the people against such a condition.

Two of these are mentioned in the speech from the throne. Apart from the necessity of providing employment, these in my opinion are essential in any event. The two mentioned are the trans-Canada highway and forest conservation.

The wastage and depletion of our great forests has been for years a national disgrace. We shall await the government's proposals for conservation which we hope will do more than conserve in a narrow sense, and will be sufficiently comprehensive to include reforestation, afforestation and flood control, to be undertaken of course in co-operation with responsible provincial authorities. We would hope, too, that in co-operation with the provinces our forests may be planned, and that also there may be proper planning of their development, exploitation, or whatever appropriate word one might choose, so that future generations may not be denied what we have enjoyed.

The building of the trans-Canada highway is long overdue. Obviously this must be an all-Canadian project. Let me make the suggestion that a flat grant of money to the provinces on a percentage basis will not suffice. It seems to me that the federal highways plan in effect for many years in the United States should be considered and studied. The experience gained there should be used as a guide in this country.

The needs of the provinces vary: some are richer than others. Some of the provinces have great distances and sparse population, with consequently larger mileages per capita of all types of roads to build and to maintain. In other provinces there are mountain regions and soil conditions which would mean that the kind of highway the trans-Canada should be would prove a costly undertaking. Indeed it would be too costly for some of the less favoured provinces to bear. Those factors, as well as the choice of the best, most efficient and most economical route should be reviewed carefully by parliament as well as by a federal-provincial conference.

Now that the matter of Canada's right to amend her constitution has arisen, and we believe that the constitutional rights and privileges of the provinces must be recognized and protected, we believe that ways and means must be found by agreement to assist the provinces in improving other public facilities, particularly those having to do with education. A modern system of education involves large expenditures in plant and equipment, but of the most vital importance is the type of person engaged in the teaching profession. As I have good reason to know, unfortunately

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many of our most able, most gifted and best fitted young men and women either leave the profession or do not enter it because of the lack of opportunities and remuneration it offers. The limited financial resources of some of the provinces, and the communities comprising them, simply cannot cope with this situation. In the discussions with the provinces I should hope that some consideration would be given to the problem of providing federal aid for education in all its branches, without restricting the rights of the provinces in that regard.

Opportunities for discussing other aspects of the proposed constitutional changes will arise. Therefore I am not going to discuss them at greater length today. We shall await presentation of other matters mentioned in the speech from the throne, requiring consideration by the house, before attempting to discuss them. I see the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) in his seat. Let me say to him that I hope the proposed amendment to the Prairie Farm Assistance Act will increase the benefits and enlarge the scope so as to enable all farmers affected by crop failure to participate in the benefits of that act.

It has been said already this afternoon that opposition members in parliament have a most important function to perform. The Liberal party has been given an unprecedented mandate to govern this country. Under the circumstances, however, an alert and vigorous opposition becomes of the greatest importance. It has been said often that the best kind of government is the government that is a bit insecure in office. Having sat in several parliaments, I believe the best one in which I have served, because of the discussions which took place and the manner in which hon. members kept on their toes, was the last one, in which the government had a fairly slim majority.

Consequently in this parliament we find that more responsibility falls upon members of opposition parties. Though we are small in number, the C.C.F. will do its share in making critical examination of the government's proposals and activities and, as in the past, will continue to work for social and economic justice for all our people.

Because we believe there are certain specific measures which for some years had been promised by the Liberal party, I do not propose to follow the example of the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) and let this opportunity go by without offering some amendment. Therefore, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), I move this simple amendment:

That the following words be added to the motion: "We regret, however, that Your Excellency's advisers have failed to propose legislation to remove the means test from the old age pension."