

The Address—Mr. Whiting

Parliament must be concerned about the type of approach we take.

I thank hon. members for the extended time granted to me.

Mr. Rud L. Whiting (Halton): Mr. Speaker, first of all I should like to join previous speakers in congratulating the mover of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, the hon. member for Bourassa (Mr. Trudel). As was mentioned earlier, the hon. member for Bourassa sits very close to me and has become a very good friend. It was my pleasure to have the hon. member visit my riding last fall to speak to a group of people in Halton. While there he made many friends, and I took the liberty of sending copies of his remarks to the people in Halton who met him. They wish him well and wish him continued success in his parliamentary career.

To the seconder of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas), may I say that the people of my riding have not had the pleasure of having him visit our part of the country. However, knowing him as I do, and from listening to the speech he made in this debate, I can say to him that he would receive a very warm welcome should he visit the riding of Halton.

The opening of a new decade is a time to renew our hopes and aspirations and to assess the values that have assumed importance in our way of life. It is a sort of stock-taking time wherein we look at the achievements of the past and weigh them against the problems that forever seek solution. It is time to reaffirm our faith in our institutions and in our democratic system. These thoughts were reflected in the Speech from the Throne when it referred to freedom of the individual and equality of opportunity as our most cherished possessions. It talked of the enjoyment of life as measured in qualitative rather than quantitative terms, and a society which encourages imagination and daring ingenuity and initiative.

● (5:50 p.m.)

As these remarks were amplified throughout the Speech, it reflected an optimism on the part of the government that the 1970s will be a decade of growth and expansion, not only in material things but in all things which would give Canadians a way of life that could be the envy of the world. I say this despite the agonizing test to which the country has been put in the past two weeks. Our greatest duty is for all of us to stand together and to uphold and support authority. Let us then work for the betterment of all. We have our problems; let us deal with them.

Agriculture is still a major problem, despite years of serious and determined effort on the part of organized farm bodies, departments of agriculture in every province and the federal Department of Agriculture to bring the industry a reasonable measure of economic and social

[Mr. Skoberg.]

stability. The importance of the industry is well known to everyone. When prices drop below the cost of production, when markets for the products of agriculture are inadequate in relation to the volume of goods that have been produced, then the industry is in trouble. Very few are the years in modern times that could be termed good, and many are the years that have been bad, with consequent bad effects on the nation's economy, expansion and progress in the pursuit of stability and security.

Marketing boards, acreage control, price controls, subsidies to ensure minimum prices and other devices have been resorted to in an effort to avoid overproduction and to ensure a decent standard of living for the agricultural producers caught in price squeezes and unmarketable surpluses. Through it all there have been humanitarian protestations related to exploding population, hunger amid plenty, waste through storage necessitated by lack of methods of distribution, problems of credits and payments, etc.

It is an open question when and how any of these problems will be solved to the satisfaction of peoples directly involved and those indirectly involved. But for the moment let us take a look at agriculture as one of Canada's industries. It is in a bad way, with rural slums developing and more and more farmers leaving the land, mostly for economic reasons. The movement away from the farms of this country is more likely to accelerate than to diminish. Of course, not all the farms being deserted are being abandoned entirely, but enough are being forsaken to constitute a threat to our basic heritage, the soil. The time has come for the development of a new philosophy regarding this heritage. Through past decades, through all time, the prime interest of agriculture has been to cause the land to produce more abundantly and at the same time to protect it from deterioration and misuse. The objective has been to produce food for the peoples of the earth.

In these things we have been quite successful. There is not the slightest doubt that in Canada we can produce most of the food needs of our peoples. If we had to, technological advances are such that we could double our production in less than five years. But we would be able to do so only if the plant, the farms and the ranches were not allowed to fall into disuse and disrepair. Manufacturers do something about it when they get in a cost-price squeeze or a situation of overproduction in relation to the capacity of markets to absorb. One of the steps they take is to seek new items to add to their line, and new lines that will keep their productive capacity in use.

One of the steps that could be taken by Canadian agriculture would be to develop secondary outlets for agricultural production. As well as being the food basket for mankind, agriculture should become a supplier of raw materials for our great and growing processing industries. What the crops would be, what needs industry might have for raw materials, should be researched for possibilities. These possibilities then would require further research to determine potentials for fibres or for