Major Harris Addressed Parliament at Opening

Major Walter E. Harris, M.P., moved the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne on Friday of last week, with a splendid address, which is given in whole, as follows:

I should like first to express my thanks to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) for the kindness he has hown in asking me to speak to this motion. It is an honour which he has conferred upon the constituency of Grey-Bruce; but I know that every elector in that constituency will join with me when I say that the honour was actually conferred upon the armed forces of the dominion, for in all probability, as the Prime Minister has said, in 1943 all our armed forces will be in action, and for that reason this will be perhaps the most memorable year in the history of the dominion.

Up to present the Canadian army has not taken a prominent part in the war, but this year it will reach the peak of its strength, when it will be composed of two army corps. When it goes into battle it will have more tanks and more mechanized equipment than any other army of its size in the world, and in most instances, if not in all, the equipment which it will take into battle will have been made in Canada It will be led by young officers, most of them younger than I am, who, along with their troops, have been trained for that day by one of the greatest soldiers of the British empire. More than that, our army has been planned and equipped by one of the ministers of this government who knows what an army ought to be, and who created it accordingly.

The admiration and respect for the Canadian army which I met on all sides in Great Britain were based to some extent, it is true, on the reputation made by the Canadian corps in the last war, and I must say that every member of the Canadian army will take a leading part in the effort of the empire in this war.

While I was overseas I had the pleasure of being principally with English army units and in English schools, but I did get around to the Canadian army various times. If I were to mention only one incident in particular it would be the three delightful weeks I spent with the regiment from the home town of the hon. member for Three Rivers (Mr. Ryan). That regiment was placed under, I suppose, rather strange circumstances. The boys were keen for battle and were prepared for it. Their morale was exceptionally high. May I state generally that the morale of the Canadian army was high when I went over there, and it was much higher when I came back, a condition I believe entirely due to the Dieppe raid. In that battle we found that the heroism of the Canadian soldier under the most trying circumstances is equal to any task he may be given. If there is one thing which does depress a soldier it is to find, after he has been completely trained that he must spend a period of inactivity, during which time he is not being used in battle. Nevertheless when I say this, I am not saying that the Canadian soldiers in Great Britain are dissatisfied with the present condition. Each one, without exception, appreciates the great honour the war office has conferred upon him in saving him to act as the spearhead of the attack when we seeek to liberate the people of Europe from German domination. That understanding of his ultimate goal and ultimate honour has made the Canadin soldier curb his impatience, and eager to train against that day.

Naturally when overseas I took the opportunity to compare the three armies, that of Great Britain, the United States troops which were present, and our own. I also had some time to see what the civilian population was doing, and if the house would permit I should like to tell briefly what I saw. The male civilian in Great Britain is either in war industry or medically unfit for that work, and is carrying on an essential civilian occupation. He is a member of the home guard and takes his turn to fire watching, checking blackouts and preforming similar duties. As a member of the home guard he drills on at least one and sometimes two nights a week, and in the summer months from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning he is in the field with the active army receiving instruction in further defensive tactics. That is a weekly programme sufficient to test the strength of many people listed as category A in the active army. His duties are increasing, rather than diminishing, because each member of the home guard in Great Britain realizes that in a short time nearly all the armed forces of Great Britain and her allies will leave those islands, and that they will have to defend themselves against possible German invasion.

The women of Great Britain are in war industries. They have replaced the men in civilian occupations, particularly those in the transportation systems. They belong to Red Cross organizations and more particularly to organizations distributing food and clothing sent from this country and the United States. So perfect is their organization that when a family is bomber out, but is fortunate enough to survive, although deprived of all their belongings, with the possible exception of the few clothes they may be standing in, within an hour or so, no matter what time of the day or night the bombing may have taken place, the family is placed in new quarters and supplied with a variety of clothing of the correct sizes and provisions for the coming day. This is done by married women who probably looked after the children of other married women in war industry, have done some Red Cross work and have managed to keep their own households going. I can think of no contribution being made in this war equal to that of the married woman of Great Britain who not only works the hardest and is the lowest paid, but who is doing her work cheerfully, and in full realization of the dangers just across the channel. Therefore, if this afternoon I make some comparisons, I do so with a full knowledge of the great efforts being made not only by the civilian population but by the three armies of which I have spoken.

Having all that in mind, I should like to tell the house that from what I have seen the Dominion of Canada can be justly proud of her civilian war work as well as of the fighting qualities and numbers of her troops. We have overseas over 200,000 soldiers, sailors and airmen, and we shall have more shortly. We have another 200,000 under arms in Canada either training for overseas service or on active service defending our country To the very last day of the war we shall require a considerable number of them, to defend our coasts from Alaska to British Columbia and from the maritimes to Newfoundland, and shall have to keep troops in those localities. That is essential, and the duty they are preforming is equal to any contribution that will be made.

I understand that last year our enlistments exceeded those of 1941. What is even more important is the fact that the enlistments of the last half of 1942 exceeded those of the first half. That is a record which this country did not have toward the end of the last war, and one of which we may be exceptionally proud.

It does not seem long ago that the Minister of National Defence for Nacal Services (Mr. Macdonald) announced in the house his programme for the expansion of the Royal Canadian Navy. We now have 46,000 men and over 500 ships in the Royal Canadian Navy. The duty they are performing, if not greatly publicized in this country, is one which the people of Great Britain fully realize. They have a great appreciation of the protection afforded the transportation of food which has maintained that country. I do not know of any person engaged in war who undergoes a strain equal to that of the man serving in the navy. Those of us in the other services unloubtedly have moments of danger; but for long continued danger there seems to be none equal to that of the man who goes to sea over long periods of time and under a constant submarine menace.

In the Royal Canadian Air Force we have 150,000 men, a force which I believe fully justifies the planning in the fall of 1939 and justifies the hope of the Prime Minister expressed at that time that the training programme would expand and might very well be the largest single contribution of this country to the war effort. The Royal Canadian Air Force is now growing in the number of squadrons under its command, and in addition to that we have a great many men in the Royal Air Force. There is something exceptionally comforting in the knowledge of a fighting man that he has friends overhead in time of danger.

I understand the Royal Canadian Air Force has served on every front and at all times, and has performed the perhaps less glorious but nevertheless essential and important duty of going far out to sea in the protection of our coasts.

I understand that we have enlisted and enrolled over 700,000 people for military service in this country. On any basis of population we may wish to take, that is a record which will compare most favourably with that of any of our allies. In addition to this I believe we have over 900,000 people directly engaged in the war effort through the manufacture of munitions, and the like. Another 150,000 are engaged indirectly in the services essential to these mnufacturing concerns. This makes a grand total of people directly engaged in the war effort in the Dominion of Canada of well over a million and a half. That again is a record of which we need not be ashamed. On the contrary, while pride is not expected of our own efforts, I assure you, sir that all this is appreciated in Great Britain and by everyone there to whom I have spoken.

The speech from the throne indicates that this will be a session of post-war planning along with the maintenance of our present war effort, and in this connection I should like to say that one of the greatest things that we can do is to continue the close relationship that we have with the United States. We are greatly indebted to the United States for the efforts she has made in this war, and we shall be more indebted as time goes on. At the same time the United States is indebted to us for having maintained Great Britain with food and supplies from the fall of France to the end of 1941. In this mutual respect for each other's contribution lies the greatest hope for our future relationship, in particular in connection with our trade arrangements with the United States.

Some three years ago the people of this dominion were called upon to choose a leader for the coming four or five years. At that time many reasons entered into the choice, but I think there was one on which we all agreed, that is, that at that critical time in our history it was essential that we should have as a leader of this country some one who was well known and whose talents and honour were respected in the United States and in Great Britain. If that were true then, as it undoubtly was, it is equally true at the present time, because in the post-war period, being among the united nations which will plan the futur,e Canada will need someone with experience and who is held in the same high regard by the nations which will make the decisions.

There has been some undue optimism about the duration of the war. There has been some quite sound optimism over the conclusion of the war, but it is fotunate that many people, some of whom have the public confidence, have been making guesses as to the duration This past summer the German army launched one of the greatest offensives in military history and caused grevious loss to our Russian allies and made great gains. If at the present time the German army is retreating and forfeiting most of those gains it is due to the cracking of that army; it is due to the heroism and military wisdom of our allies and the material support which this country, Great Britain and the United States have given to Russia. There is no sign in my opinion of the German army cracking permanently, nor is there yet any sign of the morale of the German people cracking. We should carry on the war on that basis and with that belief.

As this war proceeds it will be inevitable that along with our allies we shall redeem certain lands now occupied by Germany. The north African campaign demonstrated that along with carrying on military efforts it is necessary to supply food for the civilian population, and this will be necessary with other civilian populations that we temporarily take under control. Only the United States and Canada have the means to do this. It is [illegible] have set up a joint [illegible] of our agricultural departments so that we may work in conjunction with the United States.

I seems to me that despite the discussion this afternoon about our surplus wheat, it is essential that we produce more food in this country, perhaps of other kinds, in 1943 and 1944. To do this it is necessary that the farmer obtain more labour than he has at the present time. I am sorry to say that in my own constituency the production of food fell off slightly during the past year. It would have fallen off more had it not been for the extra efforts of the farmers themselves. I know that this is a great problem, but I know that the government realizes its importance. It is a man-sized job, and I notice a man sized man is taking care of it. But if my own riding is to be taken as an example of rural Ontario, I assure the government that they cannot expect increased production unless some labour is provided for the farmers.

I do not presume to make suggestions to the committee on post-war planning, but I should like to refer to the great numbers of people in Europe who undoubtly will want to come to this country when the war is over. Many look back upon the period of 1900-1910 as the period of greatest progress in the dominion, but many people aid that we could not assililate lated into their population. The test the people who came here at that time. After the last war there was a similar opinion that the large numbers of people who entered the United States could not be properly assimi- of both these worries has come during this war. Many of the people who came to this country from Europe and many of their descendants are in our armed forces, as great a percentage as the percentage of those who came from the British Isles. The same condition obtains in the United States. I do not think we need to fear the coming to this country after the war of the people of various races. As has been said many times, we have exceptionally large quantities of raw materials which are awaiting manufacture and export. It seems to me that these can be turned to profit by creating a population here much larger than we have at the present time.

If I may, I should like to say what I think the Canadian soldier expects when the war is over, and I intend to give the thoughts of soldiers with whom I have been in contact for the past thirty months. He is fully aware that at the present time his pay and dependents' allowances is on a high level, if not higher than that of the soldier of any other country. He knows the standard of living in this country is as high, if not higher than that of any other country. Therefore he expects that the income to himself and to his dependents will be on a like level. I know the government is well aware of this. I suggest, too, that pensions might be reconsidered because it may be that th present pension level does not bear the ratio it should to the pay and allowances.

However, when the Canadian soldier returns—I include also the Canadian sailor and Canadian airman and all the women who have joined the auxiliary services—he will naturally expect his old employment back. We have provided for that by statute. But the house will understand that few soldiers who come back after three years of war will want to reengage in the employment they left. Their horizons have widened, and their ambitions are greater. They would like better employment and, without resentment, they hope they will get it. That is all that the Canadian soldier expects. His own talents are sufficient to do the rest.

I am very glad to see that social insurance occupies a prominent place in the government's programme. Our soldiers in Great Britain have learned that in Great Britain milk and fresh fruits are rationed to hospitals and children, and as a result the health of the children in Great Britain have shown a decided improvement. I suggest to this house that it should be our purpose to see that all children born in Canada have a sufficient supply of these foods at least so that the health of this nation will improve greatly within the next twelve years. It is surprising that with our good climate our health standard was not so very much higher than that of other armies of the world. It is a first essential that the health of this country be improved, and may I make bold to say that if it requires the expenditure of public money, whether by way of subsidy to maintain the production of domestic foods or to purchase foodstuffs from abroad, it is our duty to provide the money.

Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated in this country that two great races can live side by side and progress so long as the minority respects the majority and so long as the majority is zealous to maintain the rights of the minority. That is a lesson which has yet to be learned in Europe, and it is a lesson which we should try to teach many peoples. Along with the United States we have shown that political differences do not need to interfere with mutual trade and mutual respect, and I am sure that our two countries can show that we have a higher standard of living on this continent and that we have also the proper approach to post-war planning.

In connection with many of the speeches one hears about democracy I suggest to the house what I said last year, that we represent democracy as it is known in Canada, and in our name there are going to be many sacrifices made this year. I hope, indeed I am sure from the past record of this house, that its deliberations and the decisions made at this session will be on a sufficiently high plane to justify the sacrifices which are going to be made this year, and those decisions I am sure will be directed to making a greater Canada, not for the sake of greatness, but because we can contribute something to the welfare of humanity.

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Grey County Federation of Agriculture and Grey County War Committee

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FLESHERTON, Fri. and Sat., Feb. 5 and 6
SINGHAMPTON, Mon. and Tues., Feb. 8 and 9

FROM 10 A.M. TO 4.30 P.M.

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