Talk # 6

I live in a wooded area beside Lake Simcoe. Sometimes I go to my back door and listen for the bird songs. At first it's hard to hear them, there's a chugging motor on the lake, the rumble of a distant diesel, or the muted roar of highway traffic beyond the trees. But by listening intently, I finally catch the bird melodies— one by one they triumph over the strident noises.

I think there's an analogy between this experience and our attitude towards contemporary world news that pounds at our minds— loud and often terrifying—wars and rumours of wars; the awful violence of hate and intolerance, we hear proud boasting about supremacy in nuclear weapons— countries shouting their intention to arm with this means of universal death. It seems the clamour of a world intent on destroying itself.

But listen—there's the lowing of healthy cattle and the rustle of ripening grain stocks on plains that too often knew only the dead silence of drought and famine—there's the sound of steel ploughs replacing the conqueror's sword at Jati—there's the laughing of children in their new gardens in the Sudan and the happy talk of fishermen returning with a fine catch in motorized boats—there's the animated talk of students at Mysore as they envision a new heaven and a new earth for their people through the new food technology; the quiet discussion of Indian farmers squatting on the carpeted ground, searching as our farmers do for better farming practices....And there's a sound close by— the mature dedication expressed in the reports of our young people who've learned by personal experience the desperate struggle of life in poor developing parts of the world. And comes too, the eager conversation of our university students, now close to the bloom of older cultures, learning along with students from developing countries.
As you listen to all this and more, it becomes a melodious powerful triumphant fugue, repeating in different settings the same theme—the gentle strength of the ideal of brotherhood bursting the chains of ego and ignorance, freeing us to release our fellowmen from the bondage of hunger and want.

I had the good fortune to attend a Freedom from Hunger seminar in 1963 at Scarborough. There I heard leaders tell of the unbelievable advance in food production, technology and distribution—I heard the blessed effect on unproductive plains of irrigation, good seed, fertilizers and modern methods; of the clearing of jungles and land drainage, and a beginning answer to the monstrous spoilage of food through the Mysore Project. I heard of the new blessing of education for many, learning for many farmers in developing countries patterned after the kitchen meetings that grew into Canada's world-famous Antigonish movement. And I learned too, that for every acre cultivated there are 2 tillable in the world; that a farmer in a developed country can feed his own family and 26 others. I came away knowing that there's plenty of room for the human race on this contracted globe—we only need to put into universal use our knowledge, dedication, our will and our goodwill. To me the Freedom from Hunger Campaign was not only a realistic goal but represented a milestone in the growth of mankind.

All through the seminar a great prophecy kept singing through my mind: "Every valley shall be exalted". As I obeyed a compulsion to set down my impressions a title came easily—"Comfort ye comfort ye my people". With those impressions I shall close this series of talks.

\textbf{WHEN} every man in less developed lands, working weary unproductive soil may cultivate it joyously and with good report; when the miracles of science have brought seed-time and harvest to barren places, penetrated jungles and levelled hostile hills; when the good earth
responds to the tiller's hand and heart, and to his mind, now stored with necessary knowledge.

**WHEN** every fisher in deep waters may with adequate equipment bring in a catch commensurate with his effort; when preservation is part and parcel of all food production.

**WHEN** every mother in the have-not places may use the bounty of earth and sea with worthy understanding; when she need no longer endure the daily misery of that raping ruler, Ignorance, and his family of evils--hunger, sickness, despair and bitterness; when her children do not deface the record of humanity with harsh deformities and ravaging disease; when as a human right every mother may rather understand and practise the ways of decent living.

**WHEN** every child where people live and die in ignorance shall have a chance to go to school and come of age with golden powers for his own and other countries' needs; with a sure conviction that hunger, pestilence and famine can be forever banished from the earth--sure too that a longer life is on the way, not thirty-five to forty, but like us, three score years and ten.

**WHEN** you and I, the fortunately-born, add our individual concern to the plans of governments, when we seriously support the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations, and understand the goals of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign; when all of us catch the concept that decency, mercy and justice for all, touchstones of peace and freedom, can take root and grow through our efforts.

**THEN** Isaiah's ancient words that crown with forceful grandeur that great aria in Handel's Messiah, "Comfort Ye Comfort Ye my people, saith your God"--these words become not only a pleasure to ponder, but a firm command.
AND THEN the ringing words of the chorus following, assume the
daring dimensions of an ancient prophecy being fulfilled; "Every valley
shall be exalted and every mountain and hill be made low and the crooked
shall be made straight and the rough places plain"....
AND THEN the Alleluia Chorus may sound across the world—the glory
of God through humanity in our day.