

The Address—Mr. Peters

The national harbours board claims that the revenue of the wharf at Cap de la Madeleine does not justify the expense involved.

I would humbly submit, Mr. Speaker,—and I believe the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Public Works will understand my argument—that it is impossible, when there is no adequate wharf to accommodate a vessel, to make any profit. Let there be a wharf of an appreciable length to accommodate an ocean-going vessel or a ferry boat of a reasonable tonnage. Then, traffic will become heavier at Cap de la Madeleine, which will relieve Trois Rivieres and help that city and Cap de la Madeleine to continue to prosper.

Mr. Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has now expired.

(Text):

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, things that happen in parliament occasionally happen very suddenly, and sometimes you find you have a promotion when you do not expect you are going to be promoted. It may be that way at the present time.

Tonight I should like to speak about a problem in my riding, a problem which I think affects all Canada. Recently I talked to a national press representative whom I drove through my constituency, and he was very surprised to find such a large fertile agricultural area in that part of northern Ontario. This area was completely unknown to him and I presume that some people across the country are still unaware of the fact that the riding of Timiskaming contains the odd geographical phenomenon that is called the little clay belt. However, in years to come a great deal more will be heard about the little clay belt, and as the need grows for more agricultural production in Canada I believe this very large natural resource potential of agricultural production will come into its own.

Mr. Herridge: The same as the Kootenays.

Mr. Peters: Yes, it possesses some similarity to the Kootenays. I understand our areas are similar in length of time of development. In many cases the people occupying the farms in my riding are the original pioneers who cleared the land 50 or 60 years ago. Indeed, there is not one farm in the Timiskaming riding which has been worked longer than 70 years. The little clay belt has a terrific agricultural production potential, but it is a potential that will not be realized until we

are able to develop markets and increase our consumption of the products produced in that area. The agricultural potential of all northern Ontario will be realized in years to come, when probably the area will be the breadbasket of all America. In Timiskaming we have a million acres of arable agricultural land. The hon. member for Cochrane (Mr. Habel) represents another area, the great clay belt, that in the more distant future will be brought into production with a capacity of 6 million to 7 million acres of farm land.

In the little clay belt we have 300,000 acres of taxable farm land. We have 1,600 farms that produce agricultural products to supply the needs of close to 100,000 people. Unfortunately because of our inability in years gone by—particularly in the last 20 years—to develop markets and dispose of the agricultural production of which we are capable, we now have only 400 farming families that receive the major portion of their income from the land on which they live. This indicates, of course that many of the farms occupied by the 400 farmers have increased in size and production. Advancements in automation and technocracy have made their impact and now less farmers are producing more than ever before.

This is a very interesting agricultural area. It is what one would call a mixed farming area. We have about 25,000 head of cattle, and I am trying to interest the federal government in vaccinating them against brucellosis and making it a controlled area. These cattle are both beef and dairy production. We have a large new industry being built up in beef in conjunction with the community sales of that area. Therefore this is a very important agricultural area. It is an area that is, in my opinion, representative of agriculture in all parts of eastern Canada and the problems we have are probably very representative of the agricultural problems across the country.

I will not detail all the commodities that are produced there, but I should like to mention one. Maritimers are very proud of the fact that they grow very good potatoes. They do not grow really good potatoes. The people from my area won the Canadian championship in the potato class at the royal winter fair this year and they know, because of past experience, that they will continue to win it. This is an indication of the fact that in northern Ontario we have a very great potential in this field; and the surface is only scratched.

We have another problem, and this is certainly true of all eastern agriculture. I should mention that the previous speaker placed some emphasis on this problem as it affects the