

*The Address—Mr. R. Gauthier*

If we must continue to claim that we must retain in this country the advantages accruing from the exploitation of our natural resources, this development must be favoured before anything and we must then see to it that they be processed locally.

The development of these mineral resources has already begun but serious observers have noticed that the progress of these industries has been paralysed through the absence of adequate means of transportation which could be used to direct the ore to large Canadian refining plants which it would be high time to establish in strategic locations, along the St. Lawrence and the Saguenay. As a matter of fact there is already under construction at Chicoutimi a nickel refinery to which will soon be added, I hope, a copper refinery and possibly even a zinc refinery.

The Saguenay river is most certainly one of the finest inland deep draught waterways flowing into the St. Lawrence and situated hardly two hundred miles from the main northern Quebec mining centres.

The government must therefore take such steps as are necessary to establish along the Saguenay the necessary harbour facilities so that maritime transportation may henceforth contribute to the development of our immense natural resources.

The government must also intensify its research and experimental studies so as to find an economic and practical means of preventing the freezing up of navigable waters and to allow the year round use of our ports and waterways.

When it becomes possible to use our seaports all year round, the whole economy of our country will benefit from such invaluable progress. Experiments carried out in this field have shown that it is possible to prevent ice formation over rivers where the temperature is exceedingly cold. All that remains for us to do is to apply this process or any other which modern science will no doubt find.

Furthermore, if ever it becomes possible, as I firmly believe, to navigate at least as far up as Quebec city during the winter months, I am no less convinced that it will be necessary to favour year round navigation on the Saguenay river as far as Chicoutimi. In fact, I should like to point out to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hees), the importance of ports of the Saguenay river, especially Port Alfred, the port of the Saguenay Terminals Company, which is the third largest in Canada from the point of view of traffic. I might also add that ports on the Saguenay river are deep water ports and sheltered from heavy winds, offering thereby, it seems, a distinct advantage for their maintenance during the winter months.

[Mr. Gauthier (Chicoutimi).]

It should be remembered that over most of our country the closing of seaports in winter deprives a great part of the population of its main source of income.

It would therefore be a happy solution to the serious problem of seasonal unemployment if that part of the population had the opportunity of working all year round.

Since the development of natural resources and the economy of northern Quebec are dependent on transportation, it is my duty to point out the deplorable situation of the railway services in my constituency.

The Chicoutimi constituency whose economic importance is undisputed, is connected with other centres of our country by a single railway which is in a crude condition and in this regard I call upon the testimony of those who use it. It is obvious that steps should be taken without delay to bring about the necessary improvements. We moreover urge the government to build a new railway line affording more direct connections between the city of Quebec and towns along the Saguenay, in the lake St. John area and in northern Quebec, so as to allow trains to join the national system without using the line already existing which is too long and does not meet adequately our present needs.

Since air transport has now become almost as important as transportation by water or by rail, I must mention the fact that the industrial and commercial centre of my riding has no civil airport.

A few private air companies now use the military airport of Bagotville but obviously that situation cannot last indefinitely. Distances between Chicoutimi county and other centres give a decisive value to air transport; there is no doubt that this means of transportation will be increasingly popular in the future.

We need a modern civil airport so located as to meet the needs of the whole population of the county as well as the needs of the many people who use that means of transportation to get there from the four corners of Canada and from foreign countries.

I hope that the government will give this need all the consideration it deserves.

Enlightened minds would never question the necessity of those means of transport of which I have just spoken in connection with the economy of Chicoutimi county and of the whole of Canada.

A look at the geographical situation of our county gives an idea of the importance of this problem.