

The Address—Mr. M. Lessard

few minutes left, I would like to discuss the measure concerning designated areas.

The area of Saint-Hyacinthe has all the essential criteria in order to be declared a designated area. On many occasions, I have made to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) personal representations which have been followed by those of the city council and trade unions of the city of Saint-Hyacinthe. Unfortunately, they have not been taken into consideration.

That attitude, I am sorry to say, induces the people back home to think that the riding is not being treated fairly.

I say it again: the Saint-Hyacinthe area has all the criteria required to be recognized as a designated area. At least 20 per cent of the work force is unemployed. All these things have been pointed out to the responsible minister, delegations have come here to meet him; but justice has been denied the area of Saint-Hyacinthe. I do not hesitate to say so, this is injustice, even gross injustice towards the people of Saint-Hyacinthe. It is injustices of that kind that breed the events we have witnessed in the province of Quebec in the last few days. Such injustices give certain elements of the population springboards from which to demonstrate and attack the government.

Once again, I urge the government to eradicate those injustices because they are detrimental to mutual understanding and national unity.

Mr. Speaker, those were the remarks I wanted to make. I trust they will be taken into serious consideration, this in the best interest of the electors of my riding.

● (8:30 p.m.)

Mr. Marcel Lessard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I should like to offer you special greetings and to tell you how reassuring it is for the members to see you preside over the proceedings of the House. Your competence gives you the authority required to ensure the freedom of the members while protecting our parliamentary institutions. I think that I speak now for the majority when I offer you our best wishes for good health at the beginning of this session and I hope that we shall have you with us for a long time during other sessions and perhaps on a permanent basis.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lessard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, when moving and seconding the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, the hon. members for Bourassa (Mr. Trudel) and for Assiniboia (Mr. A. B. Douglas), proved to those who might have doubted it, that they were worthy of the confidence the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) had placed in them. I join with those who spoke before me to offer them all my congratulations.

In the past, on the occasion of the Speech from the Throne debate the members revealed the interests of the citizens they represented. Since I had the opportunity, on several occasions, to avail myself of this advantage I am certain that the people of the Lac-Saint-Jean riding

[Mr. Ricard.]

whom I have the honour to represent, will not take offence if during my speech I do not bring up the specific problems which concern them, in view of the new responsibilities which the Prime Minister has seen fit to entrust me with. It is my duty to make known in this House and to those who will be good enough to read my remarks in the official report of the debates of the House my opinions on Canadian agriculture and what it might become if only we would all agree to show some understanding.

Canadians have never, generally speaking, felt the pangs of hunger since they have been accustomed to taking for granted that Canadian farmers would provide them indefinitely, and very cheaply, with a wide variety of products, thus accepting only in many cases a ridiculous return as a reward for their efforts. We have forgotten that our farmers did not share, to the same extent, this increase in the standard of living which has been brought to us by the development of our country, with the result that they are today among the Canadians with the lowest incomes in spite of their long hours of work and the very high risk investments they have to put up.

It is quite obvious that this situation could not go on and on. It is the reason why we have witnessed these past years the birth of a counter-movement whereby farmers question the somewhat old-fashioned notion prevailing in this area of economic activity.

The farmer has always been exploited, and he wishes today to take or is taking the situation into his own hands, so as to set up a production or distribution system which will protect him against the cyclic trade recessions from which he has always come out the loser, and which will guarantee him a better return on his investments and labour.

Recently I flew over the north shore of the St. Lawrence, east of Montreal, on a clear and sunny day; looking at those wonderful farms with their multicoloured fields unfolding under my eyes I thought I was in dreamland. And I could not, Mr. Speaker, but rejoice as a Canadian about all that partly-developed potential which is our common heritage, and I was telling myself that the day is not so far off where the man owning that land, the farmer, at least I hope so, will get all the consideration he deserves, as well as a fair remuneration for his labour.

● (8:40 p.m.)

We must all agree with these objectives, even if this were to entail in some cases an increase in consumer prices. However, we should not press on or the end result might be disastrous.

One only needs to cast a glance around to realize what is the situation at present. One of our main difficulties stems from the vastness of our land and the diversity of its potentialities. Our federal system which involves the sharing of responsibilities and jurisdictions is both complex and profitable since it provides for the evolving of a national policy which may be effective inasmuch as understanding and co-operation prevail between the various levels of government.