

*The Address—Mr. Lessard*

Afterwhile, they realize that they are being penalized in a way by not being eligible for this supplementary income.

I admit it is not easy to solve that dilemma in a satisfactory manner. On the one hand, we must help those in need and, on the other hand, we must encourage those who are able to do so to fill their needs. There are a few contradictions to it. So we must rely on the pride of people and unfortunately that has a tendency to disappear nowadays.

Of course, the Canada and Quebec compulsory pension plans will produce a long time result that fewer and fewer people will need the old age guaranteed supplement.

Until then, however, we will have to try and improve the present system while at the same time keeping the normal cost of this program and other social security programs within reasonable limits for the Canadian taxpayer who already finds the bill he has to pay too high.

As can be seen, nothing is easy in politics; we are always looking for a right balance. This is what various governments who led this country tried to do and, in the case of social legislation, it is certainly an area where the Liberal governments were particularly active in the past and they will still be in the future.

A lot of work on our part and understanding on the part of all sectors of our society will still be necessary before we reach a reasonable level of guaranteed income for all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, the tradition in this House is that during the debate on the Speech from the Throne, particularly at the first session of a new parliament, the members go over the characteristics of the riding and the population they represent.

So it will be a pleasure and an honour for me to speak about my region of Saguenay Lac-Saint-Jean and particularly the riding of Lac-Saint-Jean.

First of all I would like to thank sincerely all the population of my riding for the trust they have shown once again by re-electing me for a fourth term to the parliament of Canada.

It is with mixed feelings of pride and humility that I shall endeavour to represent them. With humility because I am aware of my weaknesses faced with such a difficult task, but with pride when I think of the beauty and the dynamism of the riding I have the honour to represent for the fourth term.

The magnificent area I represent in this House, with three colleagues, is located 140 miles north of Quebec City. Discovered right at the beginning of the colony, the first homesteaders settled there permanently only in 1836.

Forestry, agriculture and later the development of hydroelectric power, have been and continue to be the basis of the regional economy. These resources have been responsible for the establishment of cities, towns and numerous villages along the Saguenay River and around beautiful Lake St. John. The last census of 1971 showed the total population of the area had reached 265,000 people.

Today, however, we worry in my area. In the last five years we have lost over 60,000 citizens, most of whom were young people looking for work which they could not find locally. Indeed, our large regional industries seem to

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have reached their peak; they no longer create the jobs required by an ever increasing labour force. The exodus of those young people is a tragedy; if it lasts many more years it will cause serious problems.

The senior governments must at all cost help stem that bleeding away and multiply the job opportunities. Of course DREE gives some assistance but that is not enough. The areas in the vicinity also need additional help. I therefore hope that the decentralization of the DREE administration, as mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, will result in this extra help being given to foster economic growth throughout my riding.

Mr. Speaker, my area is experiencing difficult times. It seems to me that some people would like to cause more trouble. Indeed, it is not by reducing the number of spokesmen in rural areas that we will contribute to solve those problems. However, this is what will happen if the report of the committee responsible for electoral boundaries readjustment is carried out as proposed.

It is especially delicate for me to discuss the matter since my constituency happens to be the one which will disappear if the proposal concerning my area is passed. One might think that I want to save my job by objecting to fewer constituencies, but under the circumstances, the constituents of the entire Lac-Saint-Jean area have unanimously asked me to object to the recommendations of the committee.

Of course I am interested in continuing to represent the people of Lac-Saint-Jean riding, since that is exactly the mission they devolved upon me by a strong majority on October 30 last. But what I want above all, Mr. Speaker, is that the region should continue to be represented by four Members of Parliament and not by three. Whether I or someone else is here after the next election is not my present concern. In fact, it will be up to the people to decide who will represent the area after the next election.

Mr. Speaker, if the proposal of the commission is adopted as it stands, the three ridings of my region will have the highest average population of all regions of Quebec, an average even higher than that of Metropolitan Montreal. When you consider the scope and variety of problems, that is rank, unacceptable discrimination.

That is why I strongly object on behalf of all my fellow-citizens to the reduction in number of ridings in my region and also to the suppression of the name "Lac-Saint-Jean" which has identified the region so well for over three centuries.

I would like to conclude—the time allotted to me is nearly expired—by making a few comments on the results of the election of October 30 last as well as on the membership of this parliament.

Many Canadians have been worrying about the problems facing the economy and the unity of Canada. This concern and the attendant uncertainty were revealed on voting day since the duration of this parliament which is meeting early in 1973 is rather speculative.

I think that the result shows that we failed—in fact all parties failed—to bring in a program for the future which could have put an end to the people's concern.