

The Address—Mr. Laprise

[Translation]

Mr. Gerard Laprise (Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, at the outset of my remarks, I should like to join with all those who spoke before me to offer my congratulations to the mover (Mr. Cote, Longueuil) and to the seconder (Mr. Basford) of the address in reply to the speech from the throne. I should also like to congratulate all those who, for some reason or another, have assumed new responsibilities at the head of the administration.

Mr. Speaker, each year anniversary celebrations are held here and there throughout the country, to mark the founding of parishes, towns or regions. The year 1964 will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Abitibi section. During the summer of 1964, religious and civic ceremonies will mark that anniversary.

I think it will be a very proper occasion to visit and to meet the Abitibi region and its people whom I have the honour to represent here since 1962. Those who will travel through Abitibi on that occasion may be assured of the most hearty welcome.

It is usual for a member in this house to talk big about his riding. So that people will know what the pioneers of Abitibi found when they arrived, I should like to quote some excerpts from the work of Pierre Trudelle: "Abitibi in olden days, yesterday and today." At page 13, here is what can be found:

This large area is full of wonderful lakes, most of them with many green and sumptuous little islands which decorate the horizon and charm the eyes of the travellers.

Further on, on page 43, this other quotation is found:

In 1906 and 1907, Mr. Henry O'Sullivan, a surveyor, explored the Abitibi district and reported that the land throughout this region of the province is fertile, being made up of a rich clay, now grey, now blue, and covered in some places with a layer of black soil, without rocks.

That is why our area, populated by very industrious people with the faith of pioneers, sparing neither efforts nor sacrifices, putting their rightful ambitions in the future, which unfortunately were not fulfilled in many cases, failed to become what the first settlers had hoped.

The Abitibi district which could have become a source of pride for the province of Quebec has been at a standstill for the past few years, especially in the agricultural field, and has been developing very slowly in the industrial field; in the mining industry alone, prospects are more encouraging; trade and business are affected by that decline. Unemployment insurance and welfare are not sufficient to remove extraordinary hardships which

are now experienced. The level of salaries is too low compared to the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about present conditions in my constituency and to remind the government of the immediate and urgent needs which have to be met so as to give to that northwestern area of Quebec the development to which its inhabitants are entitled.

First of all, with regard to farming, the Abitibi is one of the least favoured areas and among those that have been most neglected and abandoned by our governments. Complaints have been raised, and rightly so, in the east, that the farm revenue is much too low, and the Abitibi is one of the least favoured eastern areas with respect to agriculture.

In a report published in 1962, we saw that, in eastern Canada, there were 92,000 farmers with revenue below \$1,200 a year. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Abitibi, and more particularly the riding of Chapleau which I represent, is precisely one of those Quebec regions where farming is least favoured at this time. Indeed, because of a lack of organization, some communities opened up for colonization during the great depression in 1929-39 are still settlements. After 28 or 30 years, people do not yet seem able to take the decisive step between the settler's status and the farmer's status. Indeed, very few of those who are now living on the land in the Abitibi are able to earn a living solely from the yield of their land.

To give new hopes to the farmers of the area, higher revenues and prosperity, what we need in the Abitibi area is a well equipped and well organized experimental farm to study the nature of soils and the climate and give the information and advice necessary for a healthy agriculture. We also need a slaughter house to assist and promote breeding; already, beef cattle breeding is being revived in that area, and farmers are becoming more interested in that sector of farming. It is evident that, in an area as remote from the main centres as the Abitibi area, the building of a slaughter house would be a great help and a considerable improvement. We also need cold storage facilities, as a slaughter house could not exist without such facilities. Since the inception of ARDA, we have started to clear lands for the blueberries harvest. Blueberry cultivation is being developed at present and we will soon be able to produce good crops of this fruit which is in great demand. Production of this small fruit is excellent and very promising, but we must be able to control sales to a certain extent and it will probably be necessary to build cold storage and canning facilities, which would increase the producers' income.

[Mr. Fleming (Okanagan-Revelstoke).]