

The Address—Mrs. Beauchamp-Niquet

I have expressed the concern from my region of Canada and I feel they are valid concerns. I am speaking for myself, but I sense that particularly among my French Canadian friends there is often a feeling that those of us not from Quebec may not understand and may not care about what happens in that province. Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that those of us not from Quebec also understand the problems of Quebec.

I agree with the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey) who said that by being members of Parliament we will be enriched and will have opportunities that we may not otherwise have had. My colleagues in this party, and the leader of this party, are trying to bring insight and understanding to the aspirations of the people of Quebec, even though they do not live there.

I would implore all sides of this House, particularly those responsible for developing policies and constitutional changes, not to ignore what might be said by those who do not come from Quebec, because we do care about Canada, we do care about Quebec. As a Canadian who has lived most of his adult life in Saskatchewan, I care that Quebec stays in Canada. I want to say to my fellow-Canadians who live in Quebec: stay in Canada. "Dit Oui". Say no. We want you. We need you.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Beauchamp-Niquet (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, when we went before the Canadian people last winter, we stated what would be the meaning of our policies if we were re-elected. A few days ago, the throne speech confirmed our intentions of solving the problems experienced by the majority in a way which would favour the majority.

In short, the government has kept its word, as we commonly say. The policy statement of the government introduces realistic measures for all of us, including the communities in the Saguenay and Lake St. John area. That region is one of the most typical and owing to its physical geography and its social fabric, it is one of those parts of the country which could be self-sufficient, if its people so decided. This is surely a caricatural description. However, it explains the character of its inhabitants who have learned to rely on themselves before depending on some external aid.

Madam Speaker, the economy of the region depends, like other outlying regions of Quebec and Canada, on the development of natural resources. In the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean area forestry, mining and hydroelectric industries are predominant. A secondary industry based on these resources has been developed.

After a period of stagnation in the 1960s, the seventies saw a slight increase in population, although lower than the Quebec average. The main centres, towns like Alma, La Baie, Chicoutimi, Jonquière, as well as the towns in my riding of Roberval, namely Roberval, St-Félicien, Normandin, Mistas-

sini and Dolbeau, of which I am the mayor, encompass about 80 per cent of the total population of the area, which is of approximately 300,000. As in other Quebec regions, and I am thinking here of eastern Quebec, the migration of young people towards Quebec City and Montreal shows that there is still room for improvement and that the people's ingenuity deserves the attention of central governments.

In 1977, Mr. Speaker, in the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean, the personal disposable income was 9 per cent lower than the Quebec average and a labour market survey shows that unemployment is far greater than that of Quebec in general. Earnings, as far as employment is concerned, are in the manufacturing industry, especially following the opening of the Donahue plant in St-Félicien, and in the building sector. Since its implementation some months ago, the Alcan development project in Ville-de-la-Baie for example has created over 500 jobs. Besides creating hundreds of jobs, the taxation data centre of Revenue Canada in Jonquière opens interesting opportunities for the available manpower.

However, Mr. Speaker, despite these important efforts made at developing our region, the backbone of our economy—I am referring to our forestry, mining and hydro industries—require constant attention. Our prosperity depends closely on the development and processing of our resources in these three specialized sectors. But as production becomes more and more specialized, it gets more and more dependent upon the efficiency of government policies and the fluctuations of international markets. Given the fact that these three industries are largely dependent upon government actions, I look forward to the establishment of a coherent industrial policy on the development of remote areas.

In another vein, the emphasis put by the government of Canada on the use of sources of energy other than oil—and I am thinking here, Mr. Speaker, about energy produced from wood scraps, bark, for example—can only promote the competitive accounting of production costs. The consolidation of access roads as envisaged in the Speech from the Throne will provide another element of rationalization of transportation costs which, as everyone knows, are constantly on the rise.

So we can anticipate in the rather near future a framework likely to reassure the main participants in those sectors. I note with relief the possible gradual conversion of enormous investments made available in the form of social programs into more productive investments, particularly, as already pointed out by the present Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. De Bané), in so far as an industrial strategy will be solidly backed by fiscal and monetary measures more likely to promote reinvestment. I am assuming here a close relationship with the Department of Finance in any step towards regionalization, including the regionalization of the fiscal policy.

Mr. Speaker, the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean area is known favourably as one of the places in Quebec where pride runs high and the sense of belonging to something is perhaps very