

Yesterday, I listened to the speech made by the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who is the dean in this House and who spoke about communication. I hope that throughout this session both sides of the House will communicate more and more and learn to better understand each other's interests.

I conclude by stating my keen interest in the role of this House, and in the future I intend to give even more substance to my questions.

• (1135)

[English]

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex): Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Erie on his maiden speech. I too am proud to say that I have been elected to represent one of the nicest areas in southwestern Ontario, the riding of Lambton—Middlesex. It has a huge agriculture base.

I agree with the contents of his maiden speech. I stress that we all work together to maintain a strong support for agriculture and small business in Canada to ensure growth for Canada and Canadians. I congratulate the hon. member.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to have this opportunity to reply to the speech from the throne. The constituents of Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, the men and women living in the regional municipalities of Kamouraska, Rivière-du-Loup and Basques ridings as well as the municipality of Pohénégamook, gave me the mandate to express to the federal government the will of the population of Quebec which wants fundamental changes in the relationship between Quebecers and the rest of Canada.

Since 1980, I have chosen to live in Eastern Quebec, more specifically in La Pocatière. Everywhere I went, I noticed that the needs of rural Quebecers are not quite understood. Government members do not seem to recognize the urgency here, since no regional development strategy is mentioned in the throne speech.

On behalf of the neglected rural and urban populations, I would like to say how disappointed I am about this omission.

Given the insensitivity of the government to our specific development concerns, whether it is in Rivière-du-Loup, Amos, or Lotbinière, we have lost all hope of seeing the government respond quickly to the situation. Hence the need for Quebecers to get back all necessary political and financial powers to make sure measures are being taken right away.

Even if it is not included in the Constitution, regional economic development is a jurisdiction on which the federal

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government has impinged without taking into account the will of the Quebec government to take full responsibility in this area.

For over 30 years, Quebec regions have been used as laboratories for tests which only proved that the present federal system does not work.

At first, the federal government opted for economic centralization, as shown in the Higgins-Raynauld-Martin Report. This devastating approach was reinforced by the creation of the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion, whose decision-making process focused on sectoral concerns, instead of regional characteristics.

In 1987, even the Standing Committee on Regional Industrial Expansion of this House of Commons recognized the fact that the federal programs did not meet the needs of the people, because the criteria being used were not suited to the needs of the regions. Because of a lack of participation from the regions, the money was given to useless projects, instead of some local and worthwhile initiatives. Take for example the magnificent \$7 million drill hall which was built in my riding. Fascinating, but if the people in the area had had a word in the matter, I can assure you they would have found other much more interesting projects to subsidize with that \$7 million.

The federal government made some adjustments by developing a new strategy based on framework agreements. That does not work either, as shown by the unemployment rates. Regions can and must do more to supply domestic and foreign markets with raw materials. To create jobs, we must develop processing industries and make use of local resources. The government's role in putting GATT in place will also be judged by what happens here. Its defence of GATT was not very convincing, I must say. The government accentuates regional dependence.

• (1140)

The federal government might as well admit that its actions in the area of regional development are inappropriate. The economic base is crumbling, the social fabric is falling apart, the exodus from rural areas continues, with young people among the first to leave.

The number of municipalities whose population is shrinking has increased at an alarming rate in the past 25 years, so that today, their numbers exceed the number of communities where the population is growing. Nevertheless, the people in the regions are doing something about it. A first step was taken by the *Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec* and 25 groups that signed the *déclaration des États généraux du monde rural* at their meeting in 1991.

Perhaps I may recall some of the main highlights of this declaration: rights of the individual; the community's control over its future; promoting and respecting regional and local values; co-operation between local and regional partners; diversification of the regional economic base; protecting and regen-