

Rural Development

country, to which we invited businessmen. These businessmen, and the departmental heads, discussed this subject intimately and in detail. The businessmen explained the difficulties they faced, and asked us how best they could be solved. The departmental officials advised them, in turn, about the assistance available to them through the Department of Trade and Commerce.

This procedure could very easily be followed with beneficial results to the government and to the farmers of this country. Meetings could be held in the important farming areas all across Canada. Farmers could be invited to attend for the purpose of giving advice which could not readily be obtained in any other way.

When these committees are set up, I hope that the farmers whose operations may be affected by the provisions of this measure, will be given good representation, because I am sure they can provide useful and practical information. Only in this way can this measure be as efficient as it is intended.

I hope this measure will be accepted and begin to function as quickly as possible, because it is a good and useful one. Many good suggestions have been made by hon. members in all parts of this house, and I hope the minister will make use of them for the benefit of the farming community of Canada. I feel his approach to the problem is good, and I am sure he will take advantage of the many suggestions that have been made. I am very pleased indeed to give my strong support to this measure.

• (9:10 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, having listened to hon. members of various counties, we can easily understand that even though pilot-areas are located in our province, there are others which are not considered as such but where the hon. minister could certainly find as much poverty as in any of the so-called pilot-areas.

This afternoon, the minister dealt rather at length with the poverty which exists in many rural areas of our country. In fact, the department, which is under the minister's jurisdiction spent several million dollars to discover the poor.

They forgot, Mr. Speaker, to spend millions of dollars to relieve them. To discover the poor is one thing, but to relieve their poverty is another.

A few moments ago, I heard the hon. member for Norfolk (Mr. Roxburgh) telling us about the poor in his constituency, one of the richest in Canada and the hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Asselin) talking about the need to attract tourists in his constituency and asking the minister to direct tourists toward Charlevoix. He stated with reason, that the Lower St. Lawrence, the Charlevoix area, is one of the beautiful regions of the province. The hon. member for Rivière-du-Loup-Témiscouata (Mr. Gendron) emphasized the importance of farm product marketing. I do not think the problem lies there. Farmers who are sure of selling their products are able to market them.

They have to be sure that they will sell their products at a profit, so that it will pay them. Nobody can blame a farmer who decreases his production or gives it up when he realizes that it does not pay. This, to some extent, is what is happening not only in one area but throughout Canada, except in the west where the government guarantees to western farmers the sale of their wheat at a profit. We do not enjoy the same privileges in eastern Canada.

I come from a mining area where 30 years ago, settlers were established on uncleared lands. The legislation was then known under the name of Colonization Act. We then had the Rogers plan in Ottawa and the Auger plan in Quebec and the federal government had developed jointly with Quebec a plan for those who wanted to settle on farms.

Well, thousands of families came to settle in Abitibi, in the vicinity of Chapleau county and my own county of Villeneuve, in 1934, 1935 and 1936.

Mr. Speaker, after 30 years of labour on these farms, it has just been found, in 1966, that there are poor people living there. It is important to consider now if it would not be wiser to guide them back to urban centres. The study that could be made today would not take long, because 30 years ago, we had settlements of 200 to 250 families while now—and I invite the minister to come up for a visit to my area—in these same settlements there is not even half the population there was in 1935. At that time, both governments, federal and provincial, had a settlement program under which the settlers were paid from \$10 to \$15 per acre of cleared, tilled and seeded land. These people were dying a slow death.