

Government Organization

agreement. As I understand it, the government of Canada is undertaking to make available some \$225 million over a 15-year period as a federal contribution to a \$700 million economic development program. Some of us have a little trouble figuring out just how Prince Edward Island is going to produce the balance of approximately \$500 million. We have difficulty in understanding how that government is going to produce approximately \$2 for every \$1 the government of Canada puts into the plan. Under these circumstances we may be excused for being a little sceptical about this venture which is more or less coincidental with the launching of this new department.

The minister should give us some satisfactory explanation or factual information about the cost-benefit studies in respect of the causeway versus ferries. I think we should have some explanation as to how the province of Prince Edward Island can proceed effectively with this development program when it has to find \$2 for every \$1 put up by the federal government.

The government of Canada must recognize the importance of and face honestly the budgetary problems of the provinces, particularly those faced with serious regional economic disparity, and I have in mind the province of Quebec and the eastern provinces. The government of Canada must honestly recognize that unless these provinces are able to provide an adequate standard of growth related services as conceived by the Economic Council of Canada, the minister is likely to have little success in making substantial progress in reducing economic disparity. I say this as plainly and bluntly to the minister as I can.

I am disturbed that other ministers, including the Minister of Finance and the minister in charge of the Treasury Board, take the attitude that by setting up this new department and putting so much in its budget we will take care of regional development, and that the government as a whole will not then have to continue to be conscious of its responsibility and will not have to act in respect of the problem I have outlined this afternoon. It is clear from the budget of the province of New Brunswick that the government of Canada must act quickly in this matter unless it is prepared to sit back and see the morale of the people of that province completely destroyed, to see its people completely submerged by their difficulty in providing services while paying possibly the highest taxes in the country out of their inadequate incomes. As I

[Mr. Stanfield.]

have said, the government must act quickly in this regard.

● (3:30 p.m.)

I hope that the attitude expressed by the Minister of Finance the other night does not really represent the attitude of the government. I hope that what appears to be a rather cynical attitude displayed so far toward the little province of Prince Edward Island does not really reflect the determination of the government to deal with this problem.

The minister announced this afternoon the appointment of Professor Bill Smith to the Atlantic Development Council. There is no question that he is an excellent man, well informed on this subject. I have heard rumours, quite frankly, of another excellent appointment the minister has in mind. These men, even if they are associated with others, cannot accomplish very much unless they are operating in a proper framework, unless they are operating under properly conceived plans, unless they are operating with proper financial support. This support must involve facing honestly the kind of problems the government of New Brunswick had to face the other night. If the situation continues as it has, I say again that the minister will have little success in doing very much in those areas.

The government of Canada must face up to its total responsibility. There is no sign of it doing so yet despite what I am sure is the very sincere intention of the minister who spoke just a few moments ago.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Chairman, fortunately the few remarks the minister made at the beginning of the debate this afternoon do not require any change in the text of the speech I have prepared. Perhaps in his remarks later today or possibly tomorrow the minister will suggest different orientations in the development programs of his department such as some of us would expect. If so, some of my criticisms may turn out to be irrelevant. I hope this is the case.

The problem of regional economic disparities in Canada is scarcely a new one. It has been with us throughout our history. What is comparatively new is the statistical documentation of these persisting disparities. Since the end of the 1920's, when the first statistical studies were made, we have seen that the growth of the Canadian economy as a whole has not in any way reduced the gap in wealth which exists between provinces and regions within provinces.