

responsibilities that I should be carrying as the government leader in this place.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I want to congratulate the Leader of the Government in the Senate on the confidence that the Prime Minister has shown in him by adding to his ministerial responsibilities, and I take the opportunity to encourage the government to increase ministerial responsibility in the Senate. In this particular case it has not increased the number of ministers, but it has increased the size of the ministerial responsibility.

I was watching the proceedings in the other place yesterday, and I wish to tell the minister something that he may already know. There was something that could be, by way of understatement, expressed as disappointment in the opposition in the other place, namely, that the minister chiefly responsible for this initiative would not be available to them for information, criticism and opposition. The Minister of Transport rallied round to say that he would also be adding to his now manifold responsibilities the responsibility to answer in the other place for Senator Murray. I have also heard that there is some criticism of this initiative, that it is not really an increase in contributions to the Atlantic provinces when all the factors are taken into account. But that is secondhand information. However, I do want to assure the minister that if these criticisms and disappointments expressed in the other place are going to worry him, we mean to make up here any deficiencies in that regard to the best of our ability.

Hon. H.A. Olson: Honourable senators, I would like to say a few words about the announcement the minister has just made. When I listened to him explain his responsibilities and, indeed, the structure, it occurred to me that it was exactly the same as the program this government phased out some two and a half years ago; namely, the Ministry of State for Economic and Regional Development. I want to join with my deputy leader in congratulating the minister and the Prime Minister on giving this responsibility to a member of this place. I certainly support the idea and concept that matters having a major regional dimension, as this one has, ought to be entrusted to the Senate. I have no problem with this policy at all. I think it is appropriate that a senator should be appointed the principal minister in charge of a central agency, the responsibility of which is to promote regional economic development.

However, I have a great deal of difficulty with this announcement, because I am sure that all the words the minister just uttered were taken from the text of the speeches made when MSERD was set up in the first place. They are exactly the same. I am glad to see that the minister and his government has come full circle to promoting what was in place and what they destroyed. Now, under some new concept—

Senator Murray: It was DREE that was destroyed.

Senator Olson: It was not DREE that was destroyed but the Ministry of State for Economic and Regional Development,

and the acronym for that is MSERD. All the great things that the minister has said about what they are going to do were there in that original announcement.

Senator Austin: It involves the same bureaucrats.

Senator Olson: Let us not have any misunderstanding that this idea that has been advanced for the Atlantic region, or for any other region, is a new idea. I hope the minister will get the responsibility from the government and the Prime Minister soon to do something along these lines for the other parts of Canada that are deserving of regional development as well, particularly western Canada.

Whether or not this \$1.05 billion of so-called new money will materialize is a question that we will take, I think the popular expression is, with a grain of salt until we see it. In a few minutes I will be asking the question: What happened to the \$1 billion that the government promised the grain farmers of western Canada? Thirty per cent of that amount was paid earlier this year, and not one bloody red cent since. In other words, 70 per cent of that money is still outstanding, and we would like to know why.

Senator Frith: Pay up!

Senator Olson: The honourable senator might want to know what happens in giving a transfusion to a corpse—it is too late. Why not give us the money now?

Senator Argue: Why not last fall?

Senator Olson: Yes. Where is the program for 1987, when you have not paid 70 per cent of the program for 1986? We are starting to wonder about these things. In any event, I wish the minister success, but he should not have come along announcing that it was a great new concept, because it is almost a perfect duplicate resurrection of a program and administration that was in place and that his government destroyed, threw out.

● (1410)

Senator Murray: But you were a member of the government when the administration of John Turner did away with that.

Senator Olson: I want the record to show accurately that this government completely abandoned regional economic development on September 4, 1984, when they were elected. Now they have finally come to recognize that there was a program in place with all the trappings, all the details, which the minister has enunciated today. We had FEDC officers in place in every provincial capital in Canada. They threw them out. Now they are coming along with a great idea that they are going to do it for the Atlantic provinces first, and the minister has said that they are going to transfer a large number of the programs from DRIE and from ERDA. Well, where were they before they took them out? They were in the program under MSERD.

Senator MacDonald: Who destroyed MSERD?

Senator Olson: You guys.

Senator Frith: We are glad you asked that. Are there any other questions?