

National Economic Development Board

not be set back on its feet again? No. He already finds in our country all the elements required for prosperity and, indeed, a large measure of prosperity now existing.

Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not suggesting that our country cannot progress even more.

This is precisely why we legislate and ask the house to consider this bill to set up a national economic development board, which would be responsible for pursuing the aims I mentioned earlier and whose work will bring tangible results, like a further expansion of productivity, increased production of manufactured goods in Canada, greater wealth for Canadians who will thus be given an opportunity of investing in new Canadian projects, as well as more employment and a higher living standard.

As a citizen of the province of Quebec I rejoice together with my fellow citizens at this spectacle of a greater and economically stronger Canada.

Mr. Speaker, those are the reasons why I am happy to introduce this motion, as I am satisfied that it will be followed by a new era of co-operation among Canadians, be they scientists, financiers, industrialists, the professionals or university men.

If we work together and eliminate the partisanship which we witness but too often, on the other side of the house, we should attain the objectives set by this bill.

(Text):

Mr. Walter Gordon (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, I am sure all hon. members were interested in the minister's wide ranging speech in which he covered a lot of subjects, but he did not tell us very much about this bill. The members of the opposition welcome the bill to the extent that it proposes some degree of long term economic planning, which we have been advocating for so long.

The Liberal program, which was developed prior to the election in June of this year, contains on page 10 a proposal to set up an economic council. This proposal reads as follows:

The council's members will have a wide variety of experience in business, in labour matters, in farming and in government. They will be assisted by an expert staff. The council will be charged to analyse what is going on and what is planned in the Canadian economy. It will investigate trends and publish outlook reports. It will enable government and business, labour and farmers together to take a reasoned and co-operative view of economic needs and objectives. The council will then make recommendations to government about the planning of its own activities and the measures that will assist full economic efficiency and progress.

A similar proposal was contained in the Liberal party's program for the 1958 election, and as my friend, the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) pointed out the other day, the same idea was put forward by the royal commission on Canada's economic prospects on page 436 of its final report, which is dated November 1957, in the following terms:

We believe it might be helpful if a body of economic experts were established whose function it would be to inform the government of changes which might be thought desirable in economic policy in order to ensure a high level of employment without inflation. One responsibility of this body would be to publish annual or semi-annual reports for the general information of the public. The success or failure of such an innovation would depend of course very largely upon the good judgment of the men who might be chosen for the task and also upon their reputations for objectivity and hence the confidence which the public would be likely to have in their opinions.

It may be suggested, no doubt, that in presenting this particular proposal the government has merely lifted something from the Liberal party program and, if I may say so, not done a very good job in doing so.

Mr. Martineau: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Gordon: Certainly.

Mr. Martineau: In the opinion of the hon. gentleman, would not such a proposal as he has just described as being a part of the 1958 Liberal program have been a good measure, say in 1952 or 1955, or somewhere around there?

Mr. Gordon: I think Your Honour a little while ago made some remarks about intelligent questions. I will be glad to try and deal with any that fall under that category. If hon. members want an answer I will be glad to give one. I am all in favour of getting ahead with things sooner or later, preferably sooner. I am more interested in looking forward than I am in looking back. If the minister had permitted me to go on to my next sentence, I was about to say that I have no objection whatever to the government borrowing ideas from the Liberal party program or from any other party's programs.

Let me emphasize this as much as I can. There are no copyrights, there are no patents, there are no monopolistic rights in the area of ideas; and I hope there never will be. Therefore if the government sincerely believes that the program and the proposals put forward by the opposition would be in the best interests of the country, it is a clear duty