

National Economic Development Board

certain communities of our country, not only in southwestern Ontario but in the maritime provinces. We were told what the economic situation was in those communities. My own city of Windsor was among them. We were told of the winter levels of unemployment in those communities. We were told by these gentlemen what has been done under the town and country planning act in England, what they did in England under the unemployment act of 1960, and what has been done under corresponding enactments in other countries.

If the government is prepared, through this proposed board, to make an attack on problems in this manner, then we will feel that the minister was justified in saying this evening that this proposal is revolutionary. Then the Prime Minister will be justified in saying that this is major legislation. But, Mr. Chairman, until the bill is brought down, until we are given further evidence by this government of its real intentions, while we support the principle of the resolution, we cannot help but have a grave doubt about the capacity and the determination of this government to meet head on the emergent, serious economic and social problems which face Canada. This is the situation which faces this tired government, a government now about to give evidence of its intention to do something substantial, we hope.

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Yes.

Mr. Aiken: I will make it very easy—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I will be glad to answer, if I can.

The Chairman: Order. I am sorry to inform the hon. member that the time of the hon. member for Essex East has expired, unless the committee gives unanimous consent.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I will be glad to answer.

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Chairman, we have listened to the outline of the general purpose of the resolution before us which is the beginning of the legislation which will lead to a national economic development board. We cannot but give our approval to what is needed to be done and what it is hoped this board will accomplish. However, to just say that we shall have another national board is by no means the answer to the problem that the economy of Canada faces at this time. Whether we listen to the words spoken from the government side of the house about what

a wonderful condition our economy is in, or whether we listen to the spokesmen for the Liberal party and hear what a terrible situation the economy is in, the fact remains that Canada and her economy is far from what it ought to be and what it could be.

I was interested in listening to the remarks of the hon. member for Essex East. He has spoken forcefully. It impressed me, however, that he was dealing more with what has happened in the past than with what we need now. My grandmother used to say to me that it was not a fool who learned from experience; it was a wise man. While we have many lessons to learn from the past, let us just make sure that we do not live only in memories of the past. Rather we must learn from the experiences we have had and relate them specifically to the problems at hand and the future that is ahead of us. That is why it is very important that we in this house during the hours of this particular debate give very careful consideration to the question that is before us.

I would hope the government has not laid out some stereotyped program for this national economic development board, because contributions should come from all sides of the house. What must come out of this legislation is something which meets in the best possible way the problems which we face. I would say this to the government: We already have a multiplicity of boards in Canada. When the historians record the history of the last five years, I am sure that one thing the Conservative government will be known for, amongst others, will be that they have been more extravagant with the appointment of boards and commissions than practically any government before them.

But in this multiplicity of boards let us remember that just another board is not necessarily the answer to our problem. Boards are no panacea. In fact, I hear so much talk about boards that I think we are almost becoming bored with boards. I am not so sure we are not reaching boredom in Canada. Nevertheless, if a board of this type is going to have teeth put into it and we are actually going to meet some of our problems through it, then it is good. In considering it we must make sure that it does develop into something good. Let us remember also, that as we proliferate authority through the establishment of commissions and boards, we do so at the taxpayers' expense. Another board does not necessarily mean that we have a better solution. Too often boards become a consolation, or at least offer a chance for consolation, to the government in that it gives them an escape from responsibility by having another additional authority on which to place