

*Government Organization*

[Translation]

**Mr. Marchand (Langelier):** Mr. Chairman, I have to oppose this amendment because I question the reasons behind it.

It may seem odd indeed, Mr. Chairman, that the law should provide a special board for the Maritimes while we provide none for the rest of Canada. The reason is that this area is a special problem. Besides, the Atlantic Development Board we had before was of great help. Since the structures were there and the four provinces had problems in common, we felt it was not in the interest of the Maritimes to dispense entirely with this Board.

Now, since the four provinces involved have accepted the Atlantic Development Board, we take it for granted that it should be included as a council in the new legislation.

But we cannot predict, Mr. Chairman, what kind of council will be acceptable to the other provinces and what will be the structure of these councils which we do not know yet.

For example, will it be sufficient to have a council like the others to meet the needs of the lower St. Lawrence, of the Interlake area of Manitoba? Nobody can tell. However, in the case of the Atlantic provinces we know exactly how the agency did function. We know its structures and certain voluntary organizations have supported the Atlantic Development Board. This is why its establishment is provided in the legislation but nothing prevents us from acknowledging a council that would be formed especially for the lower St. Lawrence and nothing will prevent us, later on, to adopt a special legislation purporting to give legal status to a council whose structure and jurisdiction cannot be predicted to-day.

Now, when we say that we have downgraded the Atlantic Development Board, its particular role should obviously be emphasized, not because of the Atlantic Board but because of the new department of Regional economic expansion whose aim is precisely to coordinate all these activities.

I think that it is the honourable leader of the opposition (Mr. Stanfield) who said, in his brief: there is not enough coordination in all the efforts towards an adequate regional expansion, but I would answer that it is the very rationale of this new department. So, it is certain that if we aim at coordination we cannot have, within the department, Mr.

Chairman, three, four or five semi-independent bodies which will ensure regional planning outside the Department. It would be running counter to our very intentions.

It is not that we are dissatisfied with the Atlantic Development Board. On the contrary, we will be happy to use the work it has accomplished because we wish precisely to ensure not the centralization, but the co-ordination of all the department's activities related to regional development.

Now this new Atlantic Development Council will not have a greater executive power than the former one, because we are taking away from it a great part of that power. On the other hand, it will be able to advise the minister and his department on all matters under its jurisdiction. Indeed, it will be able to give advice not only on basic policies in the Maritime provinces but also on ARDA, FRED and all other programs related to the industrial incentive agency. This will give the new Council an overall view of the problems in the Maritime provinces as well as a certain responsibility.

However, as regards the executive power that Board had, we cannot maintain it, Mr. Chairman, unless we accept not to ensure real co-ordination.

That is why, that Atlantic Board is a council of a special type with a history. It was an extremely valuable experience, and we wish people who participated in that Board's activities to take part as much as possible in the activities of the new council. That is why we can sanction its creation through a provision in the legislation even if we are not able at the present time to provide exactly for the type of agencies other provinces will want to establish, in order to implement our programs.

It must be remembered that we consulted the premiers of the four provinces concerned. They agreed not only on the appointment of Mr. Smith but also on the maintenance of a body for the Maritime provinces.

As regards the other provinces, Mr. Chairman, we are not sure. Some of them may say: we will have nothing to do with such councils or, if we want one, it should not be similar to the Atlantic Development Council.

Mr. Chairman, that is why, on the one hand, we created this council that will succeed the Atlantic Development Board, but on the other hand, we are not going further now, not before we have had the opportunity of discussing the matter with the provinces and of making certain experiments.