

Regional Development Incentives Act

He speaks of Upper Canada.

—“has made the task of attracting industry to the Atlantic provinces, much more difficult.”

He suggests that designating these areas neutralizes the incentives program since, “when everything is designated, nothing is designated.”

We are almost at the stage, Mr. Speaker, where this great country, this land of riches untold, this land that Laurier said had the twentieth century in the palm of its hand, has become one massive designated area.

Mr. Stanfield: Give these fellows another year!

Mr. Macquarrie: I think we have to approach this important piece of legislation with a little more than technocracy. Where does the regional disparity concept fit into our study? It comes, surely, from the concept of the nation as a whole, that because of certain national structures and certain national policies, regional inequalities were built into our system and the national government had an obligation to adjust them. Down through the years we have tried to overcome disadvantages through subsidies and various grants. We know that even in times of national prosperity there were regions within the country which, largely because of national policies, remained disadvantaged. We were unable to share fully, or indeed proportionately, in the prosperity of the nation as a whole.

• (8:40 p.m.)

Recently the concept of regional disparity has taken on an extra degree of sophistication. It is obvious, in the historical sense, that through the initiative of the former Premier of Nova Scotia, Mr. Smith, the question of regional disparities reached the agenda of constitutional discussions, as it properly and legitimately should. It was discussed when spokesmen for the various jurisdictions within this federal structure met together to consider problems common to all of them and to both jurisdictional levels.

I think we ought to begin this whole thrust toward legislation aimed at correcting regional disparities by looking at the problems of areas which have economic difficulties because certain national policies worked against them and in the long run worked against the good of the commonalty. It is regrettable, alas very regrettable—and this is part of our difficulty today, sir—that the whole country is in the doldrums. This great land, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, is suffering from a sluggish economy. We are today dealing with a piece of legislation which was designed to compensate for the disparities among regions, whereas I submit we ought to be engaged in an assault upon those problems which have been created, I fear, in the main because the national policies themselves were faulty and inadequate. This, I think, is the crux of the matter.

There is no one, I am sure, in this party or in this House who is not aware of, concerned about or without sympathy for the special and economic problems of the province of Quebec. Those of us from outside Quebec quite frankly are appalled that the economic difficulties

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

of Quebec should have reached such an acute stage before the national government galvanized itself into action for dealing with them. I have read, and after checking the Parliamentary Guide I am convinced that what I have read is correct, that we have never before had in the cabinet of the national government such a powerhouse of Quebec ministers. We have never had so many. So I am disturbed, surprised and filled with wonderment that so acute a problem should develop in this important and historic province and that so little attention has been paid to it until now. Therefore, anything that I say is not a reflection of any lack of concern on my part for the province of Quebec. I think the minister would be ill-advised not to note that there are possibilities of serious misunderstandings.

I have before me clippings from a few newspapers. Some are articles and others are editorials. One headline reads, “Atlantic area fears special status lost”; another is, “Budget called pro-Quebec”; another clipping is headed, “Quebec needs bigger bite of hand-outs from Ottawa”; another says that APEC is critical of the pro-Quebec stand.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Is the hon. member anti-Quebec?

Mr. Macquarrie: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the minister.

Mr. Stanfield: He was suggesting that the hon. member is anti-Quebec.

Mr. Macquarrie: That is the kind of thing I would expect from that hon. gentleman. Perhaps he thinks that 3,000 of us are in a certain category. He is very good at multiplication. I hope he does not go into a “FRAP” when I say this, but I have been in this House quite a deal longer than he has.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Too long.

Mr. Macquarrie: Too long—that is statesmanship for you! I have no regret for anything that I have ever said about Quebec. I regret nothing that I have ever said about the problems of his linguistic or provincial group. I think he does his party, the government and the country a disservice by trying to exacerbate and manufacture differences which do not exist.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Macquarrie: If he is disinterested in the opinions of other people and newspapers beyond his own province, that is his responsibility and that is on his conscience.

An hon. Member: It is also stupid.

Mr. Macquarrie: I am interested in what the people in all ten provinces say and think. It is my job to try to measure my utterances and my concerns against the