

Regional Economic Expansion

tained in a document were allowed to be inserted into our records, another possible injustice would be created.

I might refer hon. members to Citation 333 of Beauchesne's Fourth Edition in reference to the use of language in a petition.

For the reasons stated, I feel that the document filed yesterday is not a petition which meets the requirements of the practices and usages of the Canadian House of Commons covering the receipt of petitions. With regret, because I know the matter is perhaps of interest to members, and certainly to the hon. member for Greenwood, I suggest that the matter cannot be brought to the attention of the House by way of petition. The hon. member knows as well as I that there are other ways a grievance can be submitted to the House. There are many avenues open to the hon. member if he wishes to pursue the matter, but I suggest, with regret, that the avenue of a petition is not the proper one at this time.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CONTINUANCE OF PRESENT DESIGNATED REGIONS FOR FURTHER PERIOD

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I should like to inform the House that, following consultations with the provincial governments, the Governor in Council has decided that regions now designated for purposes of the Regional Development Incentives Act should continue to be designated for an additional period of 12 or 18 months.

Regions designated in August, 1969, for a period ending July 1, 1972, will continue to be designated for a further period of 18 months, that is, until December 31, 1973. These regions include all of the Atlantic provinces except Labrador, all of eastern Ontario and parts of northwestern Quebec, part of northern Ontario, southern Manitoba, parts of southern and northeastern Saskatchewan, southern Alberta, and southeastern British Columbia. Regina, Saskatoon and Renfrew-Pembroke will also continue, until December 31, 1973, to be designated as special areas for purposes of industrial incentives.

[Translation]

Regions designated in January 1971 for a period ending July 1, 1972, will continue to be designated for a further period of 12 months—that is, until July 1, 1973. These regions include southwestern Quebec and parts of eastern Ontario.

By July 1972, current designations will have been in existence for somewhat less than three years. Six to nine months were required to bring the program into fullscale operation and, during the initial two years of the program, manufacturing investment, activity, in Canada as in many other countries, was at a relatively low level. As a result, experience under the regional development incentives program is only now becoming sufficient to permit meaningful evaluation. Intensive work to that end, and to

[Mr. Speaker.]

review related aspects of the regional economic expansion program, is underway and will be followed by a process of thorough consultation with each of the provincial governments. The decision to continue existing designations will provide the time needed to complete this process.

[English]

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, first of all I wish to thank the minister for extending the usual courtesy by providing an advance copy of his statement. Second, I should like to say we particularly welcome the announcement contained in the minister's statement that he is at long last undertaking an evaluation of the whole regional development program. This has been suggested many times in the House during the past two to three years. It has been suggested by the Canadian Council on Rural Development and by others as well. I can only say we hope that when this review is completed it will be made public to allow for critical and, if you like, independent analysis of that evaluation.

The minister's statement extending the term of all designated regions until December 31, 1973, really comes as no great surprise. We are, however, a little surprised at the brevity of the minister's statement; we are surprised that he said so little. In fact, we expected that he would take advantage of this opportunity on motions to respond to some of the criticisms that have been levelled at the program both inside and outside the House. Having said that, I readily admit that the minister has done a commendable job before the Standing Committee on Regional Development in his many appearances during the course of examination of his estimates. But that is not quite the same as making a statement of policy on motions in the House and giving the opposition parties a chance to reply for the record.

I had hoped that rather than continue to scatter public funds under the Regional Development Incentives Act in this ad hoc fashion across half the populated area of Canada, the minister would have shown greater selectivity and hence a greater appreciation of the regionally disadvantaged areas of the country. In our view it is not reasonable to suppose that development of viable secondary industries can be promoted in each and every one of the population centres across the vast area of the designated regions in this country which are found in every province in the land. In each of the designated regions there are centres which have a potential for the growth of secondary industry. It is in these centres that the incentive program should, in our view, be concentrated. This concentration can be done through the mechanics of industrial complexes, if you like, similar to the new Multiplex Corporation which is now under way in Saint John, New Brunswick, and which we feel hold the ultimate promise for the success of regional development in this country. However, this blunderbuss approach of the minister in fact defeats the purpose of the program by lavishly extending the designated regions right across the country.

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We had hoped that the minister would take advantage of this procedure in the House to reply to the genuine reservations and concern that we have over the effects that the budgetary provisions with respect to capital