

Supply

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT
MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 45, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the Hon. Member for Halifax West (Mr. Crosby)—Special Recovery Capital Projects Program—Halifax Waterfront Complex. (b) Starting Date Inquiry; the Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro)—External Affairs—United States—Oil Drilling Leases Off Coast of British Columbia. (b) Canadian Sovereignty; the Hon. Member for Dauphin-Swan River (Mr. Lewycky)—Indian Affairs—West Region Tribal Council. (b) Valley River Indian Band—Proposal to Purchase Ballast Pit.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 62—REGIONAL ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. McMillan:

That this House condemns the Government for abandoning its commitment to alleviate regional economic disparities and thereby encouraging continued economic inequality between the Atlantic provinces and the rest of the country through a policy of gutting the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, slashing investment in regional development and downgrading, for political purposes, federal-provincial development agreements.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, let me begin my remarks on this motion, which underlines the problem of regional disparity, particularly in Atlantic Canada, by commenting in a general way on the regional nature of Canada. Upon the creation of Canada in 1867, the Fathers of Confederation recognized and realized that the nation they established was a federation of regions called provinces. It was known and understood that the federation would alter the economies of each territorial area. Nova Scotia was a trader whose tall ships travelled international waters to buy, sell and exchange articles of commerce. The products of Atlantic industry were the source of substantial wealth in Nova Scotia.

● (1620)

One hundred and seventeen years later, in 1984, the great majority of our consumer goods in Nova Scotia are produced in central Canada. We pay a premium price for those products. The price would be willingly paid if it helped all Canadians and contributed to the expansion of the Canadian economy. However, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians, Maritimers and Atlantic Canadians all want to know how we in our region

benefit from Confederation. Having phrased that question, let me respond immediately by saying in fairness that successive national governments, especially the Government of the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, have addressed this problem. Many programs have been established, implemented and then abandoned. These programs were intended to rectify the problems in those regions of Canada which suffered from Confederation, particularly Atlantic Canada.

I wonder how many Members of the House remember the Atlantic Development Board. It was the orphan child of the interregnum between the Conservative and Liberal Governments in the mid 1960s. The Atlantic Development Board was to be the focal point of assistance to Atlantic Canada. It was to develop programs in a very specific way and enter directly into industrial projects and developments in the Atlantic area in the hope and expectation that it would contribute to the improvement of the economic processes in the Atlantic area. However, the Atlantic Development Board went the way of its predecessor programs.

The popular designation for this process of recognizing and responding to the economic problem, not only in Atlantic Canada but across Canada, is best described in the phrase "correction of regional disparity". That is what those in the national Government have set out to do, correct the problems of regional disparity. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the process of correcting regional disparity, which in fact benefits all areas of Canada, has been characterized by some as merely involving financial assistance for Atlantic Canada, a kind of civic welfare payment or social assistance for the poor provinces. Correcting regional disparity should and must be a national goal because Canada is only as strong as its weakest part.

The fact that correcting regional disparity must be a national goal and not simply a civic welfare payment accomplished by financial transfers and similar financial assistance, has really been recognized in Canada's Constitution. At this point I would like to pay respect to such people as the former Premier of Nova Scotia, the Hon. G. I. Smith, who later served as Senator. It was his personal goal to institutionalize the correction of regional disparity in the form of a constitution provision. Its characteristic of being a mere hand-out, a mere civic welfare payment was changed. The Hon. G. I. Smith and others who served with him, like the Hon. Robert Stanfield, were proud when the federal Government finally recognized that this was the sort of concept which ought to be institutionalized in the Constitution. In fact, Section 36 of the Constitution Act which was approved in 1972 by Her Majesty The Queen in this very Parliament, provides:

—Parliament and the legislatures, together with the government of Canada and the provincial governments, are committed to

- (a) promoting equal opportunities for the well-being of Canadians;
- (b) furthering economic development to reduce disparity in opportunities; and
- (c) providing essential public services of reasonable quality to all Canadians.

Subsection (2) of the Constitution Act provides that:

Parliament and the government of Canada are committed to the principle of making equalization payments to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation.