

Supply—Industry

or parochial planning. I think it is more effective to lay out the country in regions rather than just in smaller areas where such a program would benefit that area and ignore its relationship to the surrounding region. I am sure that if this program is to be successful there will have to be the closest co-operation between the provincial governments and the agencies interested in this type of work with industry, small industry, small business, and with labour and other groups.

I think there must be an effort to ensure that the public generally understands the purposes and objectives of the department. We should seek in every possible way to secure their co-operation. I am not suggesting for a moment that the things I have mentioned will cure the ills of the capitalist system but they may make life more endurable during the time we have to live on this planet.

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Chairman, if I may have the indulgence of the committee and the minister for a few moments I should like to pick up where my colleague the hon. member for Halifax left off on the question of the area incentive program. The minister has heard the blessings which have been expressed in respect of this piece of legislation. As the hon. member for Halifax has mentioned, the minister received communications in the form of letters, briefs, and so on from the mayors of the four distinct areas of Halifax, Dartmouth, Saint John, Fredericton and the municipalities or areas immediately surrounding these cities. Latterly he has heard collectively from the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council which represents, as has been suggested, a non-political group. This should carry added weight in reassuring the government of the necessity of moving in some concerted manner to overcome the regional disparities which exist in the Atlantic provinces.

• (2:20 p.m.)

It has been suggested that unemployment figures are the criterion for the area incentive program in the regions in which it is applicable. It is not necessary for me to recite the employment and unemployment figures in British Columbia, the prairie region, Ontario, Quebec and in our region, the maritimes. I think hon. members are very familiar with them. Therefore, suffice it that I draw to your attention one or two facts. On March 19 this year, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, employment stood at 6,821 million and unemployment at 341,000, which means

that somewhere in the order of 5 per cent of our national labour force was out of work on that date. In the maritime provinces on March 19 there were 537,000 people at work. On the same date there were 63,000 people out of work. The relationship between these figures is very obvious. In our area 63,000 people out of work represent approximately 12 per cent of our total labour force whereas the national average was only in the order of 5 per cent. I will not draw the more startling comparisons that are obvious in respect of the Ontario, prairie and British Columbia regions.

The necessity of dealing with the problems of industrial development and productivity in the Atlantic region has been brought so forcibly to the attention of the government, civic leaders, economists and everybody concerned that there is very little I can do except reiterate what appears to be a mounting volume of evidence to support two or three very basic propositions. The first of these is the need to approach the problems of the Atlantic region in the spirit that has been voiced so often by the government, the spirit of equal opportunity and equal sharing in our national prosperity. This is not easy to achieve, as pointed out by the Economic Council of Canada and by APEC. Any economist who has studied the relationship of the Maritimes to the rest of Canada has come to the same conclusion in one way or another, and that conclusion is simply that the problems cannot be approached piecemeal but rather must be attacked by one concerted effort.

The minister is very much aware of this but in spite of the pleas and urgings to pursue this course the government has not yet seen fit to do so. We do have the Atlantic provinces development board and the area incentive program, but I suggest to the minister that if he cannot modify, extend or enlarge the regulations under these programs at once to embrace the four areas mentioned, Saint John, Dartmouth, Halifax and Fredericton, which are the growth centres of the Atlantic region and are now outside any special incentive program, the help needed will not be forthcoming.

Because these are the growth centres and the centres to which people from rural areas will be attracted, a great percentage of whom are unemployed, the government must give serious consideration to them. It has been suggested that it is of no avail to locate an industry in a region, district or area where