

Regional Development Incentives Act

need for regional policies is clear, and it is the only path down which we can now travel. I hope that the premiers of the Atlantic provinces, two of them now, one not quite so new and the fourth almost a father of confederation, will direct their attention during the coming months of 1971 to this question. Without regional policies and other instruments under our control, it is eminently clear that we are not going to overcome the effects of regional economic disparity no matter how well intentioned our efforts.

This country is split badly on a number of very important and vital issues. Economic disparity will not help to heal any of these crucial problems. In particular, it will not help to resolve these problems to approach them in an atmosphere that seems to be one of subterfuge, guile, one that essentially is not honest or frank. It is time that this government addressed itself to the creation of a program that will overcome regional economic disparity. This failure to do so has been demonstrated not only to me, but to APEC and others who appeared before the committee, to editorial writers in the Atlantic provinces and to businessmen in the Atlantic provinces and in other regions designated under the old bill. The government has given an indication that they cannot be trusted with the economic destiny of Canada in the future.

Sometimes I wonder why the government is fearful of giving us these regional instruments that have been so often and for so long talked about. I wonder, too, about the long-range impact of such programs as, for example, the development of the Minas basin tidal power. What is going to be the reaction of businessmen if and when they are asked to make a decision with regard to the massive investment that will be required to implement the program, and they examine the records of the federal government in the matter of regional development only to find that it is, to say the least, inconsistent? During the last six or seven years we have not had a government that is prepared to address itself in a consistent manner to regional disparity. There is a problem here of fear of the unknown.

What is going to happen in 1972 when these areas have to be redesignated? What is going to happen to the Nova Scotia five year program? Where does it stand today? I have the suspicion—I do not know because no one has told me anything about this—that the program with respect to the development of metropolitan Halifax and Dartmouth has been shelved. There can only be one reaction on the part of industrialists and entrepreneurs to the lack of constancy in the attitudes, policies and programs of the federal government with particular relation to the Atlantic region.

The government thinks it has made things a little easier for us in the Maritimes. I say that is nonsense, balderdash. Unless they were a McCain, no firm would be interested in the 10 per cent differential offered in the bill. They would demand the full amount or alternatively go to the United States for funds. Who is going to come to the Atlantic provinces when a market the size of Montreal is available? Is the government prepared to change this situation if, by the end of June, 1971, there is

[Mr. Forrestall.]

a marked fall off of applications? It disturbed me that neither the minister nor the Parliamentary Secretary have bothered to speak on this matter, except to answer questions yesterday, in what I thought was almost an arrogant way. No one has bothered to tell companies to put in applications in order that they may be approved. No one has told the companies that their applications are in the process of being approved or that they should withdraw them and re-apply.

• (8:00 p.m.)

How generous is the government going to be if a company asks for a full grant under the terms of the amendment? The government has not bothered to answer these practical questions, let alone the more serious one I have just posed. How will we change direction if in six month's time we find we are receiving the proverbial you-know-what? What happens if we find we are being shafted? What will the government do if the worst possible thing happens in spite of the fact the minister says it will not happen?

An hon. Member: Nothing.

Mr. Forrestall: I suspect absolutely nothing will happen, as the hon. member suggests. I suspect that until the appetite of Quebec has been satisfied in this ample manner, which I find unforgiveable, we will sit in the Atlantic provinces as we have for the last seven or eight years with no assistance, help or direction. These are our fears. I think these fears are real.

If this matter comes to a vote tonight I must say to the minister that I cannot honestly indicate how I will vote because I am disturbed by the implications of the measure. I should like to believe what the minister has said, but I find this difficult in light of his comments in introducing the original bill.

Earlier today I was disturbed to the point that I intended to suggest tonight to hon. members that we should have a new minister who was not so bound up in the difficulties facing the government as this hon. minister is. It seems we should have a minister who is prepared to tell the country exactly what is wrong with the economy in all parts of our country, rather than a minister who says that all parts of the country must be assisted when they face problems. He should indicate how serious these problems are, and what the demands on our economy will be during the 1970's. We are prepared to do whatever can be done.

As long as I remain in this illustrious chamber I do not think I will ever understand the fear of the government about being honest with the people. Honesty of this type seems to be a magic elixir. I am sure the minister and the government would find the people of Canada quite prepared to pay whatever cost is necessary to assure every Canadian dignity and respect for his own worth and that of his neighbour. I am sure we would find them prepared to do whatever is necessary, without having to tear asunder well laid plans. The government must realize it does not have to overcome all the difficulties that