

its success he said he was not sure whether it would be continued. I hope that when another five-year lifespan is breathed into the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, the continuation of Multiplex as an essential component of the regional plan will be taken up at an early date.

It may be interesting to the House to know how I became involved in this project as a member of parliament. It is a good commentary on the case of a citizen getting in touch with the member of parliament, telling of the success of a program and asking that there be an intercession with the government. Multiplex does a very interesting thing; it provides the experts with the scissors with which to cut red tape. It provides expertise in a special field.

● (1430)

Mr. Stanfield: Where is the minister? I ask this question seriously.

Mr. Fairweather: Multiplex is a facility which enables small businesses not in a position to obtain the services of a computer to obtain data from computers. Here we are, with an operation that is fulfilling an important function, yet its future is jeopardized. There is uncertainty about the future of what the minister admits is a successful but not, apparently, an overly expensive program.

On the Friday afternoon swing shift let me say that although I welcome the extension of this department's life, too much time elapses between the conception of projects and their final approval by government. The other day I was informed of an application which took 26 weeks to go through. If the Chair will allow me to make an aside, I think the government gets into serious trouble over the way it implements some imaginative pieces of legislation. The conception is fine. Although debate may be somewhat protracted in parliament, the statutes are finally placed on the books. Then everything comes to a shuddering halt.

If I were ever to spend a few minutes with the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau), I would not discuss with him the unravelling of the universe; I would discuss the unravelling of the red tape surrounding many of the imaginative programs advanced by parliament, red tape which hamstrings by insisting on procedures that are expensive, lengthy and largely unnecessary.

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew North-Nipissing East): Mr. Speaker, I had not expected this bill to be debated so soon. However, I am glad it has come before the House and I say to the hon. member who just concluded his remarks that on this swing shift Friday afternoon I am glad to be in my seat. I know he is, too.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Welcome to the Friday afternoon club.

Mr. Hopkins: Like the previous member, I am pleased to see this program extended for five years from the end of 1976 to the end of 1981. No government program, be it federal, provincial or municipal, is perfect. Even though a program is introduced with the best intentions in the world, we must remember that human beings administer it, and there is not a human being on earth who at one time or another is not open to criticism.

Regional Development Incentives Act

My personal experience with the Department of Regional Economic Expansion during the past few years has been a happy one and I wish to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to those who work in the department. I include the minister, the deputy minister, the regional assistant deputy ministers and the staff. I thank them for the co-operation they have extended to many members of the House and the dedication they have shown to their jobs. They have been severely criticized, often unjustifiably.

What benefits has the program brought to those special areas designated under the legislation? I suggest that the true measure of any government program of this type will be determined if one compares what has actually happened in an area designated with what would have happened if the program had not been introduced. During the decade from 1960 to 1970, in the county of Renfrew, one small company was established and there was one instance of one small industrial expansion. That was the extent of our industrial growth. After a certain section of Renfrew county and the northern part of Hastings county in Ontario was designated as a Special Area on March 11, 1970, we enjoyed a number of successes. A number of developments occurred which would not have occurred in the constituency, including the eastern part of Nipissing if this type of legislation had not been enacted.

I am glad to note the presence of the hon. member for Nipissing (Mr. Blais), my neighbour to the north. I am sure he will agree with me that DREE has done a tremendous job for the people of our district, the people of Nipissing, and the people of northern Ontario in general.

Mr. Blais: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopkins: It annoys me, Mr. Speaker, to note so much criticism in our newspapers, on television and radio, of a good program. We must have critics because we want to live in a free democracy, but let them get their facts correct and mention the good with the bad.

I can say now that if the Department of Regional Economic Expansion had not been established by a Liberal government, the slow growth areas of this country would have been in a far worse condition today. Their condition would have been terrible. At the end of December this year, the designation of the special area encompassing Arnprior, Renfrew, Pembroke, Barry's Bay and Bancroft will end, after extensions by the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. I plead with the government to extend the designation for another 12 months. I plead for the people in the northern part of my riding, in the district of Nipissing, to be included under the Regional Incentives Development Act (RIDA).

My reasons are these. Two days ago I received a call from a major industry in the area which had been established under DREE, it has been a good corporate citizen but was forced to lay off 60 employees because its furniture component sales to the United States dropped almost to nothing. The firm established in an area which was almost down and out and put about 300 people on its payroll. I have been in touch with the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras), the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, and DREE, and have tried my utmost to save the entire complex. Mr. Speaker, the