

regional development. Quite the contrary, it will support the Government's efforts to promote growth and development in the disadvantaged regions of the country.

Regional development in Ontario and Quebec will be the responsibility of the new Department, managed through a separate organizational component with its own field offices. The Department's responsibility for these regions will involve broad regional economic development policy and program co-ordination. It will also include advocating the economic development interests of Ontario and Quebec within the federal Government.

● (1120)

What is happening, therefore, is that this big, powerful new Department of Industry, Mines and Technology, with a budget approaching \$2 billion per annum, will be responsible for advocating regional development priorities for Ontario and Quebec. In the meantime, a Minister with other responsibilities, who will be speaking on behalf of the Western Diversification Office, will be responsible for speaking up for western Canada and a Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency will be responsible for speaking up for Atlantic Canada.

Those two Ministers and the offices for which they are responsible will not be integrated into the structure of the Government here in any way. They will be out in left field in western Canada, if you want to put it that way, and in right field in Atlantic Canada. In the meantime the regional development interests of Ontario and Quebec will be spoken for by a Minister who is one of the two or three most powerful economic Ministers. I fear that we will see a perpetuation of the problem which has bedevilled our economic management of this country for so long, that is, that successive Liberal and Conservative Governments have essentially governed for the economy of central Canada, of Ontario and Quebec, at the expense of the economies of the rest of the country.

We are told that the new Western Diversification Office is going to have responsibility to promote the economic interests of western Canada within the context of the Government of Canada developing national policies. However, when we have tried to raise specific examples of that to find out how it will work, we have found that it is not going to work at all.

My colleague, the Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom), asked the responsible Minister if he would be making representations to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and the Bank of Canada in favour of lower interest rates. It is clearly in the interests of western Canada to have the dollar cease its dizzy rise, to bring interest rates down, in order to ensure a development of the oil and gas industry, et cetera.

This morning I sat at a breakfast with some business people and my colleague from Yorkton—Melville who reminded me that the meat packing industry in western Canada has been increasing its exports to the United States but that those

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exports are now beginning to stall because of the rise in the Canadian dollar and, as a consequence, because of a decrease in the competitiveness of Canadian-packed meat products being shipped into the United States.

The answer we got from the responsible Minister was a dusty one. He was not prepared to indicate that the Western Diversification Minister was in fact speaking up for lower interest rates in the councils of Cabinet and trying, therefore, to protect the interests of the West. A decrease in interest rates of 1 per cent will have a lot more impact in terms of job creation in western Canada than the \$200 million per annum which will be spent through the Western Diversification Office.

I wonder whether the Western Diversification Office would have stood up for western Canada to have kept the CF-18 contract when that was moved to Montreal. I wonder whether the Western Diversification Office is making representations within Cabinet right now with respect to the impending Air Canada contract with Airbus Industries of the Common Market in order to ensure that a fair share of the offset production under that contract will be in Canada in order that not all the value of that contract will go to the aerospace industry in Montreal, as appears to be the case now. Is the Western Diversification Office standing up for western Canada in this matter? We do not know, Mr. Speaker, but I suspect that the answer is no.

As another example, the Department of the Environment is meant to be a co-ordinating ministry. It has been around for a long time and has substantial political clout because of the express concern of Canadians with respect to environmental protection. However, its success in ensuring that Departments such as Fisheries and Forestry follow policies which are environmentally sound has been negligible. It has had a terrible uphill battle in trying to co-ordinate the activities of other line Departments.

I wonder what success the Western Diversification Office, located in Edmonton, will have in trying to co-ordinate the activities of line Departments with economic-based activities in western Canada. If the Department of Energy has initiatives in Alberta, will the Western Diversification Office have a say? If the Western Diversification Office thinks that there are other projects which would have a greater economic impact than major energy projects which are being considered for financing by the Department of Energy, will it be able to prevail, or will its input go ignored and will it find itself out in left field while the big decisions are made by other people in cabinet and cabinet committees from which the representatives of the Western Diversification Office are excluded? Is that what will occur? I fear that that, in fact, will be the case.

Another example of where the Western Diversification Office could be fulfilling its advocate role is in the promotion of the use of western coal at the plants of Ontario Hydro in Ontario. Those coal burning plants currently draw their coal from the eastern United States and in the process, of course,