

Government Organization Act, 1970

Columbia, agencies that are covered by the Canada manpower centre at Kamloops, the percentage of the labour force unemployed was 44.3 per cent. The whole range of statistics just for the province of British Columbia alone gives a similar picture.

Inasmuch as this statistical information was available to the government, to the manpower department and to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development one year ago, there should have been developed some kind of program with regard to environmental control of pollution. These programs would have given these people some gainful and meaningful work, and by the same process enabled them to contribute something to the quality of life in Canada.

Last night the Minister of Regional Economical Expansion took part in the budget debate and recited a number of programs that his department was planning in this particular area. I submit that this was simply window dressing. If the minister is really concerned about this sort of thing, then clause 6 of the bill gives him an opportunity to do something about it. It gives him the opportunity to initiate programs or to co-operate with other agencies in similar objectives. I am sure that the Department of Manpower and Immigration has a similar objective with regard to environmental matters as that proposed by the department of the environment itself. If there is one area in which co-operation might more easily be had than any other area, it is between two departments of the same government, two structures in the federal area, each of which has a constitutional authority to involve itself in this sort of activity.

As I say, the speech of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion was window dressing, and if you read between the lines you will find that he is not seriously concerned about tackling environmental questions, about using the opportunity available to us through this sort of government activity to put people to work and to help save the nation from ecological destruction.

Let us examine what the minister said last night in order to show how distorted a view of the situation he gave the House. The minister said that one of the great steps they were taking was that they had almost concluded—the government is at the stage of “almost concluding”—new ADA agreements with a number of provinces. I think he said particularly with some of the Prairie provinces. Under these new ADA agreements there would be ample opportunity to enable native Indian people on or near reserves, in co-operation with the provinces, to do something meaningful which would give them self-respect, instead of destroying that self-respect by welfare programs and by the high unemployment level that exists among our native Indian population.

That statement by the minister was false. It was false to the extent that it did not tell the whole truth. In order to show how shallow is the approach of the government to this whole question of improving the economy, I can say that almost one year ago the federal government signed a new five-year ADA program with the province of British Columbia. Under that program specific mention

was made, among other things, of initiating programs for the employment of Indian people as well as programs for employment in the fishing industry; there was a companion activity. Even though that ADA agreement has been in existence for almost one year now, there has not been a single, solitary program put into operation of any help or benefit to a single, solitary person of Indian origin. So, when the minister stood up last night, as he did, and said that we were negotiating ADA agreements to help the native Indian people seek employment and the like, that was a falsehood.

The Chairman: Order, please. An hon. member wishes to ask the hon. member a question, but first of all may I say that the hon. member is wandering further than he should from clause 6. I would invite him to make his remarks germane to this clause. An hon. member is rising to ask whether the hon. member for Skeena would permit a question.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Chairman, I will take my cue from the Minister of National Revenue last night who said he would be glad to answer any questions at the conclusion of his remarks. I, too, will be happy to do so at that stage.

May I say I did not intend to wander. My intention was deliberately and consciously to suggest the course that this government should follow. In view of the earlier intervention by, and lack of imagination of, the President of the Treasury Board, it is obvious that the government has no intention of involving itself in this area. However, I submit it is possible for the government to do so.

One area in which the government should become directly involved through the activities of this department is in municipal sewage treatment plants, to use that for the purpose of argument. Many municipalities in this nation do not have the financial base or resources to build their own. They are up to ears in debt and are unable to get additional funds so they can embark upon a thorough program of sewage treatment within their municipal boundaries and thus curtail pollution of the environment that comes from that source.

This is an area in which the government could easily involve itself by making money available to the municipalities. I realize that the Minister of Finance, both yesterday and on other occasions, gloatingly referred to the \$16 million loan fund that has recently been established as a base for a make work type of project to the provinces and the municipalities. But I submit that \$160 million is not very much in view of the job that we have to do to preserve our environment.

In order to put this question into some reasonable perspective, I should like to relate the generous way in which the Canadian government has looked in the past, indeed even today, upon situations in other countries. Take, for example, the attitude that Canadian governments have adopted towards lesser developed nations like Argentina, Greece, India, Pakistan and a couple of dozen others. Let me point out the extent to which Canada has lent money to these countries. I am not disagreeing