

at some point or other during their career, comes into contact with them probably on a regular basis. Thus, this is a motion that personally affects every one of us as members of this House.

Third, in the spirit of the times, the government has said, and we have to accept it because it has a majority, that this is a time of deficit reduction, when moneys are not available for different projects, economic development projects and community projects, as worthy as they may be.

In light of that we need to take a more positive approach and encourage those community-based ventures that rely on the capital, the effort, the wisdom and the resources of the community to pick up the slack for the unavailability of funds from government sources in many cases.

Fourth, I would have liked to have given the minister of state for co-ops an opportunity to participate in this debate. A lot of people do not know even that there is a Co-op Secretariat that functions within the Government of Canada, that it does have a responsible minister, the same minister who is in charge of grains and oilseeds and western diversification. It would have been useful for that minister to have had an opportunity to stand in the House and explain to members of Parliament what in fact the Co-op Secretariat does, what its projections are and how we, as members, could support the efforts of that secretariat.

Last week there was a federal-provincial meeting of ministers who have responsibility for the co-operative sector, both federally and provincially. I understand that it was a very fruitful meeting because worker co-operatives got identified as a priority. I might add, not perhaps in a partisan way but just to note it, that given the statement this morning of the hon. member for Surrey on housing, I respectfully hope that worker co-operatives will not fare the same way as a priority of this government as co-operative housing has which also at one time was a priority of the government.

The fifth point that I raised with the committee is worth noting. There is no focus for community development efforts within the government, or even within this Parliament, or any place where self-reliant, self-help, local kind of initiatives are discussed, analyzed, and the results of that analysis brought to bear on a wide range of government policies. That is a perspective that has been

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lacking in many cases since the late seventies. The last body that I know of that had any formal existence along these lines was the Canadian Council on Rural Development which was disbanded in 1979.

My own interest in this area comes very much from my personal background, before I became a member of this House 11 months ago. It comes very much from my parents and I would like to acknowledge that in this House. My father was the chairman of the Laird Saskatchewan Wheat Pool committee for 42 years, from 1946 to 1988. He was a board member of the Laird co-op, the Rosthern co-op, and was a founding member of the Sask Valley Credit Union in Rosthern, so that was always very much a part of our life. I am a co-op shopper and not ashamed to admit it. I buy co-op every chance I get.

My mother comes from a family active in founding and perpetuating an organization called Mennonite Central Committee which has developed a sound reputation in community development, both within this country and in many other countries around the world. With that kind of influence as I was growing up, I could be very little other than the co-operative and community development critic for the New Democratic Party.

After spending 10 years in adult education, in 1985 I established a company called Spruce River Research, a private company that did independent research and training in economic development, most of it in northern Saskatchewan. Through that, I had experience in working with northern communities in my constituency as they, first of all, analyzed their own situation as to where they might go in the future and how they related to funding organizations like the Canadian Jobs Strategy, NEDP, especially ERDA and the regional development agreements. Two, I might note, were very helpful, the forestry agreement in Saskatchewan and the Northern Economic Development Subsidiary Agreement, NEDSA. Both of these agreements lapsed at the end of the last fiscal year on March 30 and have not been renewed, nor is there any replacement. I regret that very much.

I would like to say in a broader framework this is a fundamental issue. In many ways, this country has been plagued for a long time with trends that we are perhaps even widening the gap between the "have" and the "have nots" in this country. Concentration of wealth is indicated in books like *The Vertical Mosaic*. The Cana-