

Regional Unemployment

much trouble*in the areas we assist is that we do not provide the infrastructure necessary for those companies to operate. We could provide it at a reasonable cost. It is something that they cannot get at any price.

I hope the minister will give some consideration to what I have suggested, and if he thinks there is no merit in my suggestions I hope that at least he will think about them.

Mr. Lessard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to set the record straight regarding two or three major statements made by the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) which are not correct, to say the least. First of all, he spoke about assistance for industry. I do not have to go to the province to ask for its authorization to offer a grant to an industry which has applied for it in accordance with the rules. This has nothing to do with the province; it is our own decision.

Secondly, the hon. member mentioned that my assistant deputy minister's office is located in Thunder Bay. That is not true. The head office is in Toronto, but we have an office in Thunder Bay headed by a director general. We have now announced the opening of an office in northeastern Ontario, to be exact, in Sudbury.

The third point is with respect to the Renfrew areas. We offered grants to industries, 60 of them. When we answered the question on the order paper, we answered it on the precise day when the industries we named went into operation. The others were not in operation. They had not failed. Some had just withdrawn their application, so they did not receive a grant from us. Others were in the course of getting started, so they also did not get a grant. They were not in operation.

● (2130)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please.

Mr. Lessard: So it does not mean they all failed. That is not the case. My other point—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order. I suggest that the minister is now getting into debate. He has already spoken in this debate.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanbury: Hear, hear!

Mr. Robinson: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forrestall: When I am after donkeys I am not going to be misled by jackasses.

There are one or two things which are fairly clear here this evening, and I think they bear repeating. The first has to do with the motion itself, and just to refresh the memories of hon. members present, the motion regrets the government's inability in three or four different areas: in fiscal arrangements, transportation, energy, and trade. It is rather interesting that this afternoon and this evening the only minister remotely interested in being here on a continuing basis has been the

[Mr. Peters.]

Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Lessard), and we all appreciate his presence. I hope he goes out of here this evening with a better understanding of the degree to which there is real concern on this side of the Chamber.

My comments this evening will be largely oriented to the role of transportation in the stabilization of the regions we have set forth in the motion, generally speaking, eastern Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

It occurs to me and to many other people in regions of high disparity and in other regions of Canada that national unity, which has been so much on our minds these past few months, will never be achieved until some reasonable and acceptable measure of equal access to the wealth and opportunity of this country is available to all of us, not just to those who may be living in the central region or in other resource wealthy parts of the country.

I think the report of the Economic Council of Canada, "Living Together," goes a long way toward recognizing this. Indeed it has been much of the basis of our conversation here today, and it does show an understanding of the needs of Canadians, particularly those living in the economically depressed regions of Atlantic Canada and Eastern Quebec.

In this connection I have one basic disagreement with the report of the Economic Council of Canada, and that is with the assumption that ever increasingly transportation will play a less important role in regional stabilization and in regional development. I think that while the Economic Council may be correct in saying that, as a percentage of our total capacity to produce wealth on an annual basis, the relevance of transport in those over-all total global figures is going down each year, of course as our service industries grow, as our tourism grows, and as non-transport related industries grow, transport will assume an ever decreasing portion of that larger figure. However, the point is that neither the Atlantic region nor any region in this country will be able to survive without an adequate, well based, fully rationalized, total and complete transportation system. To assume otherwise or to tend to direct our thinking along other paths is wrong indeed, and to that degree I find the report wanting and deficient. Its information is basic statistical information, and some of the lessons it points out are very valuable, but I cannot help but wonder about the conclusion, particularly with respect to the role of transportation. I think transportation is important and always will be important.

I would like to discuss for a moment or two what has been a particularly touchy matter for the minister this afternoon and this evening. It is in the area of consultation, co-operation, and co-ordination with other government departments at the federal level and with the provincial level, with industry and, indeed, with users of transportation. I want to make one or two observations in this regard because from what we have seen and heard from the minister it would seem that transportation is virtually a non-existent area of co-operation and consultation within the minister's capacity.

We have the federal-provincial western transportation committee and the Atlantic transportation committee, but these