

Regional Development Incentives Act

lished, the essential services, utilities, recreational facilities, and so on.

Again I should mention and give credit to something which has happened, the first major agreement which was recently announced in the province of British Columbia. Fort Nelson in my constituency received a \$6 million grant to upgrade some infrastructures in the area to conform with the aims of the province, and to ready itself for the industrial development expected to take place there as a result of resource management and so on. More things like that must happen rather than simply concentrating on large industrial development. I think the department should get away from the prime industrial development concept and concentrate more on the secondary industries that have the aims and ambitions to diversify.

● (1540)

We must recognize that we have entered an evolutionary phase in Canada's development. Our industry is mainly capital oriented at the moment, and as we chase capital out of the country through the government's fiscal and monetary policies, we must create an industrial capacity and a labour oriented approach to this evolution. But that is not happening. We are not developing the capacity to bring our resources to a semi-finished state before exporting them.

I should like to turn now to the input of regional and local governments. Usually arrangements are made with the provinces, and the local governments have no input even though they have to provide the infrastructure, the quality of life, and prepare for the work force that might come in, providing the housing facilities and so on. Usually the local government is the last to know the plans for the region made in Ottawa or in the provincial capital.

The Regional Development Incentives Act must be used to develop a strategy by which all Canadians can find fulfilment of the dream we have always dreamt. It must be remembered that some of us will not go along with the technocrats who pledge that 85 per cent of our population will have to live in metropolitan centres, and that the vast hinterland can be controlled by computers from those centres. Somebody will have to populate these areas, and if we are to work out a decentralized strategy for industry it will be important to develop some incentive to go to them and remove some of the penalties for those people who face the elements in order to find part of their dream in the north country.

Last night in committee I had discussions with officials of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development regarding their strategy for developing the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. They admitted there is no strategy that we do not know what use to make of these great regions. We have not recognized the potential in agriculture or the renewable resources in the forests of that land. Of course we have a transportation strategy for the Northwest Territories and the Yukon but it is really only geared to what the large resource extractive industries are planning for the areas. We have not decided which comes first—the chicken or the egg. No transportation strategy has been developed in the Northwest Territories which would open up the region for agricultural use or for the development of the renewable resources in the forests for wood and fibre industries.

[Mr. Oberle.]

It is a sad thing when the minister gets up in this House and declares it is the responsibility of our country and our challenge to improve or increase the productive capacity of our farming industry and our renewable resource industries. It is amazing that the minister is not concentrating more of his efforts toward these areas. It is not good enough for us simply to pass this bill extending the mandate of the department for another five years without raising some of these very important questions.

The aims, ambitions, and potential of the various regions of our country are very diversified. It does not make sense to industrialize some of the regions that could be put to better use for recreation and tourist facilities, nor does it make sense to take out land for tourism and recreation when they have not potential in that area. To this point there has not been an assessment of the situation.

My colleague who just finished speaking mentioned that there has not been an assessment of the impact of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion on the country to this stage. There are tales of bungling and tales of success, but it is high time that the new minister came to committee and to the House with the full story of what has actually happened in this department over the first six or seven years.

I would be remiss if I did not touch on the inequitable distribution of funds throughout the country. I hesitate to point the finger at one region or another, but I have figures here to show what happened in the fiscal year 1972-73 which I would like to put on the record to show how the total of \$374 million was spent. The province of Quebec got \$115 million; British Columbia got \$4 million; Newfoundland, \$37 million; Prince Edward Island, \$19 million; Nova Scotia, \$52 million; New Brunswick, \$44 million; Ontario, \$19 million; Manitoba, \$24 million; Saskatchewan, \$13 million, and Alberta, \$17 million. This indicates that something other than common sense was used in making the distribution for 1972-73. Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, the annual report issued by the department does not give these figures. We had to put questions on the order paper to establish where the majority of funds are spent.

Some of the criticisms of the program that I have received concerned the way industries, particularly the large corporations, have followed the designated areas. In fact in some areas industries have sold plants only to establish new facilities in a different area, making use again of the grants and loans made by the department. As a result no new employment is created, but in some cases new and modern plants have been built. I am sure all of these things must concern the minister and I hope we have an opportunity in the months to come and in the new session to discuss some of our concerns first hand.

● (1550)

I hope the minister will consider the sentiments expressed today in the House, and in the second reading debate. Without being entirely negative about the regional incentives program, I suggest there is lots of room for improvement. I hope the minister will consider our demands in this regard.