

National Economic Development Board

uses of the economic history of Canada, the late J. E. A. Dubuc, who has been a great representative for my riding for more than 20 years and to whom—

An hon. Member: He was a Liberal.

Mr. Cote: Exactly.

—I want to pay a posthumous tribute for all his accomplishments in our area.

Those industries suspended their operations about 35 years ago because of financial difficulties. Yet, everything is still there: buildings, forest reserves, the railway, the seaport, the electric power, etc., all of which add up to an investment of approximately \$20 million. The national economic development board could thus help those industries to start again manufacturing by-products of wood, such as cellophane and so on.

On the other hand, according to a noted economist, the Saguenay district should normally have about a hundred secondary industries which could process aluminum in a great variety of products. The Saguenay district, with a population of 350,000, requires urgent action, because over 25,000 people suffer seriously at the present time from the economic situation. In the last 20 years, the population has doubled and should reach 500,000 around 1980. Sociologists have already submitted a report in which they recommend the expatriation of thousands of people, which is unthinkable considering that 90 per cent of the population comes from the area and must remain there, if what has been built at the cost of so many sacrifices is not to be demolished.

It is to prevent such a thing, Mr. Speaker, that I advocate the establishment of this national economic development board, because I trust it can improve the lot of my fellow citizens.

(Text):

Mr. Thomas R. Berger (Vancouver-Burrard): Mr. Speaker, may I on behalf of the British Columbia members of this party extend our wishes for a good trip to our home province to the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Fulton), who, we have been given to understand, has just resigned to return to our province to seek the leadership of his party there. We are sorry that his distinguished parliamentary career has ended, and we wish him well in his new field of endeavour.

We believe that the government of Canada has a responsibility to plan Canada's economic future. This is the only way we can bring prosperity and full employment to this land.

The government has submitted a bill to establish a national economic development board. We were led to believe that this would be a genuine planning board, and we hoped it would be. But it is not. After all the promises which were held out to us by the government, after all we were told about this economic development board, what has happened is this: the government has laboured and it has produced a gnat—an undernourished gnat. At a time when nations everywhere are adopting social and economic planning, the government of Canada has refused to do so in any wholehearted fashion.

It is obvious to us that what this bill proposes is not a planning board in the true sense. It is a board with only one full time member, namely the chairman. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, how can one man, the chairman of a board which will meet only occasionally, be expected to plan the economic future of this country? What is required is a full-scale board headed by a cabinet minister and consisting of economists, statisticians and other qualified people spending their time working on a blueprint for prosperity and full employment to be submitted to the cabinet and to parliament.

Why is social and economic planning so necessary today? We in the New Democratic party believe it is necessary because hundreds of thousands of people are out of work. Many thousands more live under a cloud of insecurity knowing that the plight of the unemployed may soon be theirs. Among the older people and the sick people many are unable to obtain adequate medical care. Young people have not the money to build new homes or to buy old ones.

Canadians realize that social and economic planning is essential in order to get Canada back on her feet and her people back to work. The government has heard the call which has come from all quarters of the country for social and economic planning. This call has come from people who are concerned about the mounting economic disorder which is affecting more and more industries and more and more people. What has been the government's response to this call for planning? Like everything else the government has undertaken, this venture into planning has been undertaken halfheartedly by the government. This bill and this board constitute the government's response to the call for planning and it is, in our view, a response which can only be described as halfhearted, half baked and inadequate.

We in this party have pointed out during the debates which have already taken place this session the results which planning has achieved for other countries. We have pointed