

Adjournment Debate

the creation of two committees, in addition to the Picard committee. There were therefore three committees: the Ministerial Committee, presided by the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion, the Picard Committee for the Montreal Region and the East Montreal Economic Recovery Committee presided by Mr. Pichette.

At the time, the Conservative Government did nothing to help the economy of East Montreal and to avoid the loss of thousands of jobs. Fortunately, the provincial Government led by Mr. Bourassa was able to save three quarters of the Gulf Refinery and three quarters of its employees. Bombardier was able to get contracts with the assistance of the provincial Government and to avoid closing down immediately. However, six months ago, the Picard Committee made public its 86 recommendations for the development of Greater Montreal, including the development of Montreal Harbour, the Space Agency, the International Banking Centre and so on, and for six months, the minister of Regional Industrial Expansion has been saying: "Yes, I shall announce decisions in due time." But nothing is being done. The Government keeps dragging its feet.

Two months ago, the East Montreal Development Committee, presided by Mr. Pichette, whose members include representatives of business, labour, the social-economic sector, Montreal, as well as federal and provincial representatives, unanimously recognized that, as pointed out in the study before me, while there has been economic recovery in Quebec, in Greater Montreal and throughout Canada, it had not yet happened in East Montreal. In fact, businesses were closing down, and at the time the report was published, early in September, Montreal East had 22,000 unemployed workers, 9,400 people on welfare, and if nothing was done, 3,000 jobs would be lost in the shipbuilding and rail transportation industries and at Angus.

Some of the recommendations were addressed to the authorities of the City of Montreal, and I must say that two weeks later, city authorities reacted quickly—they had taken part in the consultations with Mr. Pichette—and announced concrete measures to revitalize Montreal East and ensure there was a development plan for establishing new industries and providing the requisite infrastructure to attract new industry to Montreal East. Unfortunately, the federal Government is once again dragging its feet. There were five recommendations that were important for the development of Montreal East and were supported by the unions, including the metal workers. There was the question of a national procurement policy for the rail transportation industry. We all know that Bombardier, Angus, Canadian Steel Wheel and Laforge depend enormously on railway contracts, and as far as Vickers, the shipyards are concerned, they favoured preferential procurement in Canada for the shipbuilding industry, which would have been excellent both for Vickers in Montreal East as well as for the Sorel and Lauzon shipyards near Quebec City.

Madam Speaker, an important point was that that everyone agreed that contracts for refitting ferries and ships should be

given to the Vickers yards and that Montreal East should be designated under the adjustment program for older workers, so that these people who lost their jobs at the age of 55 or 57 and had worked 25 or 27 years in these sectors . . . unfortunately, the Conservative Government and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) abolished the existing program, the adjustment program linked to unemployment insurance, before providing for a replacement.

So the people want the East end of Montreal to be a designated area for all the workers to become eligible.

Therefore the Federal Government was invited to inject \$25 million, together with the Quebec Government, into the setting up of a bureau to help with the restructurisation and upgrading of large businesses and also to create a special fund for manpower training and retraining. It is clear that welders working on huge ships in marine shipbuilding yards need highly technical training; that is why a manpower training and retraining programme, together with a manpower skill updating programme for senior citizens as well as a development fund to attract industries to the East end of Montreal, would help solve the short-term problems there, so that the East end of Montreal could progress at the same pace as Greater Montreal.

Madam Speaker, two weeks ago marine shipyard workers—people now living on unemployment insurance benefits—had to organize a demonstration here in Ottawa simply to ask the federal Government to provide them with jobs by finding ships for them to repair. Neither the provincial nor the municipal governments are responsible for building or repairing ships, and it would be important for the federal Government . . .

I dare hope that the Parliamentary Secretary who will respond will be able to meet the expectations of the men and women living in the East end of Montreal, an area which is not only represented by Liberal Members, but also by three or four Conservative Members. The industries in dire straits are all located in ridings represented by Conservative Members. The welfare of these people would require a positive answer.

● (1825)

Mr. Michel Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for External Relations): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to correct something my honourable friend said about the POWA Program, or Program for Older Worker Adjustment. We are all aware that, in 1984, before we came to power, the Liberal Government had said that this program would be abolished and that, when our own Government came to power, it maintained this program for another year.

For the information of the Hon. Member and of older workers, I would like to point out that we are actively negotiating the terms of a new program with the Quebec Government.

As for the assistance that the federal Government could, should or did bring to East Montreal, I believe that it is important to point out to the Hon. Member and to the people