

tend—and I say this through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister—that when through an administrative mistake a person has received a considerable sum of money to which he is not entitled, some penalty should be imposed in order to discourage officials from making that type of mistake again. Nobody in this House suggests that anyone should get something for nothing. Nevertheless, if a person gets money to which he is not entitled, and gets it through no fault of his own, some lesser amount should perhaps be paid back and the difference should be made up in some cases by those who were responsible for the mistake. At one time this sort of thing was done in some financial institutions, and it may still be done. The trouble is that officials do not want to take responsibility under government programs, and the unwilling victim of this situation is often the person who is not responsible for the mistake in the slightest degree.

● (1740)

As far as regional development is concerned, having read the current Speech from the Throne I see no great cause for rejoicing. Lip service is paid to regional development; and that is about all. At one time there was a great priority on this concept proclaimed by the government, on the basis that there was nothing more important to Canadian unity than regional development to relieve disparities in our country. I was particularly interested in listening to the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador (Mr. Rompkey) speak this afternoon. He made it sound as though everything is ideal in his part of the country, although later in his speech he denied that. I was reminded of what a great Newfoundlander and great Canadian, Joseph R. Smallwood, said in his book "I Chose Canada" on the topic of regional disparity.

I think it is fair to say that not many provincial premiers fought harder for the alleviation of regional disparity than Mr. Smallwood. I think it would be interesting and for the edification of hon. members who have not had time to read Mr. Smallwood's book if I quoted briefly what he said about regional disparity, for this is a very serious matter for Canada, particularly the eastern part of our nation. At page 482, Mr. Smallwood wrote:

There isn't the slightest doubt that Canada's four Atlantic provinces are still miles and years behind the rest of Canada. These four provinces have made real progress in the last quarter of a century; but the gap today is wider and deeper between them and the rest of Canada than it was before. The Atlantic provinces are farther behind or below the Canadian average than they were 25 years ago. At a federal-provincial conference in Ottawa, I once quoted Abraham Lincoln's dictum that "this nation cannot endure half free and half slave" and said that Canada could not be the great, harmonious, and happy nation we wanted it to be while nearly half the provinces were lagging badly behind the others, and the discrepancy was becoming more acute all the time.

I will not quote from this excerpt at great length. Mr. Smallwood went on to say:

Mention the idea of the underdeveloped provinces being permitted easier credit in times of tight money, and a look of distaste comes over Ottawa's face. Mention the idea of tax-free bonds for the underdeveloped provinces, and Ottawa's only answer is a palpable inaccuracy—namely, that in the United States, where that financial device is so widely used, it is going out of fashion. Let an underdeveloped province make use of the Crown corporation technique to get development, and all hell breaks loose. The policy of reducing so-called regional disparity boils down, in the end, to a half-hearted willingness to dole out money for road paving, water and sewer systems, schools, and hospitals.

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He continues:

—with the exception of a few brave souls, nobody in Ottawa has the slightest belief in the likelihood, or even the possibility, of the four Atlantic provinces ever being much more than mere markets or colonies for the rest of Canada. They won't admit this; they'll deny it with vehemence, sarcasm, wit, indignation, and in a variety of other ways, for of course they can't possibly admit it—except in action.

He concludes this particular chapter by saying:

Some day there may come to Canada a government that will brush aside all weasel thoughts of the Atlantic provinces as Canada's poor-house; one that will attack the problem with nerve, employing for an experimental period of ten or twenty years the devices that have been condemned in the past, and others that it will think up, to get these four provinces 30 or 40 years ahead in the space of a decade or two.

Based on the performance of this government, we can be sure of one thing: it certainly will not be the one to take those steps. I commend those words of the former premier of Newfoundland to the present minister of regional development.

There is some mention about fishing in the Speech from the Throne with which we are dealing today. I note with interest that it states the government will wish to consult with provincial governments, consumer groups and producers. Once again I ask members to forgive me if I appear a bit skeptical as to the government's intentions, because at a political meeting in Nova Scotia last night the minister of fisheries for the province of Nova Scotia admitted that many regulations had been made regarding the fishing industry and "imposed without fishermen having an opportunity to express their feelings."

We have seen many examples of lack of co-operation between federal and provincial governments insofar as fishing is concerned. Although some members opposite may not believe this to be true unless they have had the experience, I can assure them that as far as Nova Scotia is concerned, there was a great deal of backing, filling and attempting to evade responsibility before the fishermen in Atlantic Canada whose industry had been grievously damaged last June got any payment at all for their losses. The minister first said he was consulting with his provincial colleague. I was then told it was in the hands of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). When members from all sides of the House pressed the fishermen's claim, it was still many months before any payment was made.

It is high time there was a little co-operation between the federal and provincial departments of fisheries. When you look at the past history, it is easy to see why even new members like myself are disillusioned with the credibility of a document such as this, after having read some of its predecessors and experienced some of the practical effects of what was not done to implement speeches from the throne in recent years.

As the hon. member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse) knows has said so well, there is certainly a great need for assistance in the fishing industry of this country. The hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador asserted that the present policy of extending the limits of Canada as far as jurisdiction over fisheries is concerned is a Liberal policy. It is obvious to those who have gone into the past history that that statement is as palpably inaccurate, as this government now trying to take credit for the idea of putting the oil pipeline through to Montreal. The