

Western Economic Diversification Act

Vancouver there was a program announced by the Western Diversification Office. It has contributed \$171,000 to COFI and the IWA. The plan is to send IWA members to Europe, to Asia and to the United States to look at the lumber markets there and to come back to report what they have seen to the IWA workers right across the province.

The Hon. Member was talking a few moments ago about co-operation and diversification. I thought that he might like to hear something positive. It was announced last night and he probably did not have a chance to see the press release. It is a program involving \$171,000, a co-operative effort between COFI and the IWA. It is a bench-mark, a very positive initiative. I am pleased about it. I think everybody is happy with it. It should bring some real benefits to the B.C. industry.

Mr. Waddell: I could not agree more with the Hon. Member. I am very pleased to hear that. That is a very good example of co-operation. We want to hang together, both in business and in labour in western Canada, or we will hang separately. We are in competition with the whole Asia Pacific, the fastest growing economy in the world. That is why I quoted some of the Swedish engineers. I think they have got their thing together in terms of specializing in co-operation and looking into education, science and research. That is the future. I am pleased to hear that.

I thought my speech was quite positive. I am glad to end on a positive note.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, or is the House ready for the question? On debate, the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis).

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have an opportunity to once again participate in the debate on the Bill that, hopefully, will be the beginning of diversifying the western economy. As a westerner I want to say that we have waited a long time for an initiative that would be a major effort—

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I may be mistaken but I would have thought that the Hon. Member had spoken in debate at third reading and therefore cannot speak again. Perhaps the Table could check.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think the Hon. Member did speak at third reading but did not speak on the motion which is now before the House, that the question be now put. Therefore the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap may speak, of course.

Mr. Riis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy to participate in the debate today on the western diversification initiative. As you know, Mr. Speaker, this is my second speech that I have given on this important issue. As far as I am concerned in terms of diversifying the western economy I would like to make many, many more speeches on ways and means of enhancing the economy of western Canada and

participating in any initiative that would result in expanded economic activity.

I wish to speak today on behalf of a group within our western communities for whom I have a great deal of respect. I refer to the small and medium-size business sector represented by men and women who are the engines of growth in our western economy. It is interesting to recognize that there are 20,000 small businesses in western Canada that are represented by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This is a business organization that is the largest small and medium-size business organization in Canada, with membership across the country. It represents the voice in a formal way of small business, along with its sister organization, the Canadian Organization of Small Business.

It has provided us with some interesting analyses of the recent initiative taken by the Government. Just to set the record straight right at the beginning, I want to indicate where it stands. This is in no way to criticize what the Government is attempting to do, at least in principle. Mr. John Bulloch, who is the spokesperson for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, called the western diversification initiative a political slush fund. I hope it does not become that. I know that that is a fear that others have indicated. I hope that the Government does not use it as a political slush fund, to paraphrase the words of John Bulloch, to support vulnerable constituencies, lure in big business or bail out obsolete industries in hopes of gaining short-term political profile, presumably for the local Member of Parliament. I hope that that is not true.

The organization raises another concern. It is the concern that this initiative might be a bureaucratic slush fund available for other line Departments and Ministries to raid in lieu of other national programs that should have their fair share spent in the West.

There is some good reason for this concern. I do not have to remind you, Mr. Speaker, of the very important initiative that was taken some months ago in the creation of South Moresby Park. It is pristine, world renowned parkland on the Queen Charlotte Islands which was set aside for a national park. That cost money, of course. It cost \$75 million to the federal Government. From where did it get its money? Did it get its money from the Parks Canada envelope? No. Did it get its money from the other programs from which parks are normally purchased? No. It took the money out of the Western Diversification Fund.

Anybody in government would say that if we have budgets for parks and we have western diversification funds, the two are quite separate. We also saw that the Government wanted to put some money into salmonoid enhancement in British Columbia. Did it take the money from the fisheries envelope? No. Did it take its money from various budgets within the fisheries ministry? No. It took the money out of the Western Diversification Fund.