

An article published in the *Leader Post* on March 18, 1988 stated:

"The small business community isn't going to quietly stand by while Western Canada becomes a pawn for short-term political advantage," Bulloch said in a prepared statement, released simultaneously in several Western Canadian cities.

He said too much money from the federal fund has been used to cater to big business or pick winners or losers.

The fund, estimated at \$1.2 billion, was established by the federal Government in August 1987 to promote economic development in Western Canada during the next five years.

I understand Mr. Bulloch's concern. For example, we have seen the Conservative Government pump \$4.5 million into the West Edmonton Mall, an outfit that has been doing quite well. Perhaps that \$4.5 million could have gone to some other effort to develop some new industry in western Canada. We have seen the type of assistance that the Government has given to its friend, Peter Pocklington. We know when the Government talks about economic development in the West, it is talking about a political slush fund for its political friends.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business knows full well the intention of the Government when it comes to economic development in western Canada. In the brief the Federation was concerned that this money was going to go to the large public and private bureaucracies, and small business would be the losers. If this is to be the case, I warn the Government that it will waste its money unless it includes in an active way the small business community.

It will be the small entrepreneurs in western Canada who are developing new and appropriate technologies, creating small efficient businesses in the West to meet local and community needs, and drawing upon community resources, that will enable economic diversification to occur in the West. It is through a co-operative approach that includes universities, centres of learning, scientific research, the resources of federal, provincial, and municipal Governments, and the resources and the entrepreneurial spirit of small business people in western Canada working together in a co-operative fashion that will enable us in the West to achieve our long sought goal to diversify the economy. In that manner, there can be jobs at home and the sons and daughters of the West need not go to Toronto or to Vancouver in order to find employment. There will be opportunities for off-farm income in order that farm families can continue to survive in this day and age of so much uncertainty in the farm sector.

● (1210)

The hope of western Canadians to develop a strong and diversified economy is a valid one. It is a hope that many in the West thought would start to be fulfilled with the election of the Progressive Conservative Government in 1984. They had to wait for almost four years before this legislation was even introduced, and looking at it, they find that it is merely a cynical attempt at getting some votes in the West.

Western Economic Diversification Act

Bill C-113 has no substance, and offers no real opportunity for those of us living in the West to fulfill our dream of a strong and diversified economy. For those of us living in the West, Bill C-113 is nothing but a farce.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Athabasca (Mr. Shields), on questions or comments.

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong), at the outset of his remarks, made mention of how pessimistic those living in his riding and his province are, calling it "next year country". All I can say is that if I were living in his riding, I, too, would be pessimistic.

The Hon. Member commenced his remarks by saying that the election of the Progressive Conservative Government in 1984 has not changed a thing in so far as the treatment of the West is concerned; that it did not bring about any more help for the West. I wonder how he squares that remark with the fact of the very massive assistance that this Government has provided for the farming community in western Canada. In dollar terms, close to \$5 billion has been allocated to assist farmers, including, I am sure, those living in his riding.

Had there been a Liberal Government in Ottawa during this time, that help would not have been forthcoming. Liberal governments in the past provided no such assistance. Also, if the NDP were ever to form the government in Ottawa, it would very quickly go broke, resulting in an inability on the part of such a government to provide assistance to the farming community.

Let me point out one concrete example of where the Western Economic Diversification Program can be of assistance to those living and working in the West.

A small manufacturer has received the rights to a machine that will revolutionize grain handling. It is a machine that will integrate the grain auger and the grain vacuum into one unit. The individual in question, who operates out of his farmyard at the moment, has prepared a submission to the Western Economic Diversification Office in Edmonton in relation to that invention, and that office is anxious to support that individual in establishing the means by which to manufacture and distribute that piece of equipment. However, because this legislation has not yet been passed by Parliament, its hands are tied. Because Bill C-113 has not yet been passed, the Minister does not have the ability to fund the many proposals submitted to him.

In the light of that situation, I would ask why it is that the Liberals and the NDP are holding up this legislation. The only funds that the Minister has today for use through the Western Economic Diversification Office are those already put in place through DREE and through various federal-provincial subagreements in relation to agriculture. There are many projects presently on hold awaiting passage of this legislation.

The Hon. Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong) made the point that the small business sector should be involved. He went on to express the view that, under this legislation, small