

*Regional Development Incentives Act*

ty. In closing, again I wish the minister much success in his new ministry.

[Translation]

**Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to congratulate the new Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Lessard) on his appointment. This is the first opportunity I have to do so. I am all the happier as I am one of the promoters who launched him in politics the first year. In his first political campaign, we fought side by side when he ran on behalf of the Social Credit. Today, he was honoured by his party with the responsibility of heading a department, and as a representative of my area and as one of my best friends, I am quite happy.

I realize that the act was first introduced in 1969 to fight regional and economic disparities, not political disparities, as I had the opportunity to point out on occasion before the Committee on Regional Economic Expansion on which I sat, and I hope past mistakes will not be repeated. I would suggest to the new minister so as to help him in his work perhaps—because it is a big job—that it might be a good thing to set up in each region an advisory regional committee to guide the minister, the whole department and the bureaucrats, because I do not feel that the bureaucrats alone are qualified to say whether an industry deserves or will deserve help from the government or will be turned down. We had proof over the years that many industries, in my area in particular should have been helped and were not. Other industries got much more than their share, probably because of underhand favours.

I am convinced that with the new minister, things will be straightened out. And if our area was neglected in the past, the minister this time will not forget it since he lives there. I feel that every precaution has been taken since the minister is from our area. With the unemployment rate between 15 per cent and 18 per cent in our area, I think the minister will certainly have work to do and will have to consider all projects because in the years to come, we will have great projects. Several large and very important projects will be submitted for our area. A uranium mine has just been discovered about 35 miles from my place. We also have major forest projects. I think the minister will have plenty of work in our area. I hope that if he helps big businesses, a fact that I do not decry because they deserve it, he will not forget small ones, the new enterprises that need government assistance to get started. I think this was not provided in our area in the past.

Too much attention was paid some inspectors, and I would even add some political watchdogs, to the detriment of the small businessman who has a hard time getting his business off the ground and who has yet to have attention of the government. I say that because I have proof of it, because it is bad politics. I am sure that is going to stop with the new minister and that our area, and especially the small businessmen—who are waiting for government assistance to support their efforts, who had savings and risked their all hoping that the government would help them through its Department of Regional Economic Expansion, which gives reasonable grants to guarantee reimbursable grants—I am sure, as I say, that on those three scores, they will now get the help they have been waiting for and did not receive for years.

[Mr. Howie.]

I therefore ask the present minister to kindly look at our area, his area, without overlooking the rights of the other provinces. I am merely asking for plain justice, fair distribution, social justice. I therefore wish the minister the greatest success and ask him once again, on behalf of my whole area, to help all the industries which need that help to get their production under way.

● (1440)

[English]

**Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West):** Mr. Speaker, I join my fellow Conservatives who have indicated that it is not their wish to impede the progress of this bill.

**An hon. Member:** Good speech.

**Mr. Brisco:** Don't rush me. At the same time we do have some suggestions and recommendations to make to the new minister, together with congratulations to offer from all members on all sides of the House on his appointment to this new position. In British Columbia we are particularly pleased to see that the minister has decided to recognize the long service provided by Mr. Mair, and has recognized the continuing needs of the province in the appointment of a new member. I believe it is Mr. Marshall from New Brunswick. We are certainly encouraged at this new appointment and pleased that Mr. Mair will be accorded regard for his service in the province of British Columbia.

There are some very serious concerns which must be voiced whenever we discuss DREE. There is no question in my mind that we have to allow this bill quick passage in order not to impede the progress of any development currently under way which otherwise might be affected by the existing time constraints of the act. However, I am concerned about the disparity which exists between the provinces in the usage and implementation of the DREE program. When I read news releases from the minister's department I am concerned when I read about Ontario—Ontario—Quebec—Quebec—Quebec—Nova Scotia—British Columbia—Ontario—Ontario—Quebec, and so on ad infinitum and ad nauseam. There is a need for an appropriate balance and an end to the disparity which exists, and I have every confidence that the new minister is going to pay attention to this regional disparity.

I should also like to comment on the need for a much closer examination of the true intent, purpose, and goal of the DREE program. It is all well and good to say that the purpose of DREE is to encourage employment and to establish new industry in areas of economic depression, but there also must be some consideration, as has already been said, about the infrastructure. There has to be consideration about the social impact of a new industry, the environmental impact, secondary or primary, in any community.

Is it the responsibility of the community and the province, or is it the joint responsibility of the community, the province, and the Department of Regional Economic Expansion to address themselves to the problems they themselves generate by the very establishment of new industry without any reference to, or concern for the needs of the community with regard to schools, hospitals, police,