

National Economic Development Board

Mr. Speaker, I was very much interested in the speech that my good friend, the in-effable member for Essex East, made the other evening on this measure in order to claim its paternity.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is a constant and very dear practice on the part of the official opposition to claim the paternity of all good measures that we, from this side of the house, propose.

An hon. Member: And rightly so.

Mr. Martineau: Mr. Speaker, we are right indeed to suspect any proposal made by members of the official opposition, for many reasons. First of all, with regard to that measure about which the hon. member for Essex East talked with so much enthusiasm the other evening, it seems to me that the government of which he was a member could, during the years it was in power, have put it in force, in establishing a national development board. Because, is it not the role of a government to foresee?

Surely, those hon. gentlemen, who sat on the government side for 22 years, should have shown some foresight instead of leaving events follow their natural course; they should have solved the problem according to the best interests of the Canadian people, rather than indulge in political expediency.

As regards the hon. member for Essex East and those who surround him, I am somewhat in the position of that hero of ancient history who said: *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*. In fact, each time they express an idea or make a suggestion, I immediately think of those 22 years during which they did not show the foresight they should have shown.

He called the attention of the house to the motion presented by his party on May 23, 1960, some aspects of which, at least, were similar to those of the present motion and he wondered why the government had not then agreed to that proposal. The answer is quite simple. It is because that motion was based exclusively on the argument that our country, under the leadership of this government, was heading towards a serious crisis. And a proposal—

An hon. Member: It is still true.

Mr. Martineau:—based on such premises could not be acceptable, in spite of the merit it might have otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, it is fair to say that the Canadian people, when they put our party

[Mr. Martineau.]

in power in 1957, decided in favour of the development of our resources, material or human.

After five years, it may be said in all fairness that the government has made giant steps in that field, while the Liberal party, at the end of its long reign, had found itself in a state of advanced old age, characterized by senility, incapable of readjusting itself, having lost its fire and its faith in our country's destiny.

We the Conservatives, although saddled with the heavy legacy I have just mentioned, left to us by the Liberal administration, settled down to our task, despite the fact that the times were especially difficult ones, not only for our country but for the United States as well and, indeed, for most other countries in the world.

Those difficulties, Mr. Speaker, are well known and I do not intend to tell you about them here. They are mainly due to the fact that, on the one hand, the numerous requirements of a Europe destroyed by war and eager for reconstruction had just about been met and, on the other hand, the countries of western Europe, having benefited from the Marshall plan and other similar ones and carried out their own reconstruction through a gigantic readjustment effort, had started from scratch and adopted new methods of production and the latest thing in plant equipment, in keeping with modern technology and the era of automation.

The steps taken by this government were mostly long term measures, and their effects have only started to be felt. This new area of development conceived and implemented by the Prime Minister and his government is apparent mainly in the field of road building, such as roads of access to natural resources, making possible the rational exploration and development of new areas of the far north. Also, the construction of the trans-Canada highway was pursued and it was inaugurated last September.

That is what has been done with respect to the great northern regions of our country. I know very well that during the many years the previous administration was in power, it failed to take strong and concrete action in that field and that those huge potential resources were left untapped.

The Liberal position in that field somewhat reminds me of the French philosopher Voltaire, who used to say when someone mentioned to him the extraordinary future that