

Adjournment Debate

● (1800)

**PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT
MOTION***[English]*

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 66 deemed to have been moved.

CO-OPERATIVES—TASK FORCE REPORT—(A) GOVERNMENT RESPONSE. (B) ENCOURAGEMENT FOR CO-OPERATIVES

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say something more about a question I asked in the House on October 15. I asked, as reported at page 374 of *Hansard*:

A year ago today in the middle of another Co-operative Development Week I asked the Minister when the Government planned to respond to the report of the National Task Force on Co-operative Development.

Soon after I became the member in our caucus responsible for co-operative development, the week to commemorate such development arrived. I asked the Minister at the time when the Government would be responding to *A Co-Operative Development Strategy for Canada* which dates from 1984. It was a desire to have the Government respond to that report that led me to ask the question in 1985 and to repeat it on October 15 this year.

A year ago I had an opportunity to debate the matter further in the adjournment debate. While I will not repeat my comments at that time, I want to refer people to them. I noted the existence of *A Co-Operative Development Strategy for Canada* which dated from May, 1984, and explored four particular areas in which this document laid out potential areas in which Canada could use co-operatives as a means of solving problems and achieving economic and social development.

Those four different areas were worker co-operatives, community health clinics, fisheries co-operatives, and co-operative housing. Not only did I note these four areas in which co-operatives could provide much for Canadian development, I also noted the fact that in several recommendations of the task force report there were recommendations for specific action by the federal Government to support co-operative development.

Let me note those as a basis for pursuing the matter this afternoon. Recommendation No. 30 of the task force states:

In order to simplify and strengthen co-operative relations with Government, the federal government should create a co-operative affairs mechanism within government that could assist co-operatives in dealing with policy areas under federal jurisdiction. The federal government should consider a Minister of State for Co-operatives—with a small supporting secretariat—as a way of accomplishing this objective.

Recommendation No. 32 states specifically:

The Department of Regional and Industrial Expansion and the Department of Employment and Immigration should each ensure that co-operatives are receiving a fair allocation of development funds and other assistance.

Based on those comments of more than a year ago, I asked when the Government would bring down its response to the task force document. I went on to ask whether the Government was considering the establishment of an agency which might do for co-operative development generally what Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has in fact done to support co-operative housing development over the years. The Minister said that to answer the question would be to prejudge the decisions of Government. Of course, that makes my question all the more urgent. When will the Government provide its response to this strategy? It should be answered not in words here but in the release of a document with respect to a proposal for action by Government, the establishment of new institutions, or whatever may be required. It should be answered in whatever way the Government may think advisable in order to achieve the objectives of the National Task Force on Co-operative Development for Canada.

● (1805)

I know that the Government has been considering this question carefully. It obtained the services of two experts from the co-operative sector, one from western Canada and the other from the Province of Quebec. These are gentlemen who are well familiar with what the co-operative sector has been doing in the various regions of Canada. They are gentlemen who are thoroughly equipped to give Government advice on how to act to support the development of co-operatives.

In respect to recommendation No. 32 I wish to note specifically that the documentation that has been provided for the aspect of the Canada Jobs Strategy issue by the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission indicates the importance of these questions. There are several options which a Community Futures Committee may select under this particular aspect. I would like to point out the first three of them.

The first is with respect to a self-employment incentive to enable individual unemployed workers in communities to become self-employed by providing grants in the form of an allowance while the business is being established. The second one is with respect to business development centres which would be used to support a community's plan for the creation of additional permanent private sector employment through the provision of advice and investment to small businesses. The third is with respect to the provision of a community initiatives fund, which would assist committees in implementing their strategies for community employment growth and recovery which they may develop.

I find it striking that the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) has issued these particular objectives without any recognition of the potential in community-based development for co-operatives to be used as the basis. That seems to me to indicate very nicely why recommendation No. 32 is so important. It is essential that the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion and the Department of Employment and Immigration ensure that the programs they