

Regional Development

than any other regions of the country. It is also obvious that what they are doing with the one hand is being taken away by the other hand of the government, and the minister and his department are therefore in a straitjacket of a cruel, outdated, heartless stupid policy which the government as a whole has followed.

I hope the minister objected to the policy and opposed it in cabinet circles. I would have even greater respect for him than I have if he opposed it not only inside cabinet circles but also spoke up outside cabinet, even if it meant that to stand by principle, to stand by decency and to stand by Canada, he would have had to resign from the government in order to make his point. I suggest that was his alternative. I am assuming he did not do this, although I cannot imagine the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) agreeing with a government policy that aimed, as the Prime Minister said, at 6 per cent unemployment or that the government would be ready to accept a 6 per cent unemployment level. If he did not agree with this, and if he saw as he should have the dangers that represented to his policy, programs and objectives, then I think there comes a point where so basic an issue weighs pretty heavily on the conscience of people concerned with making policy in this country. I suggest the basic problems which exist with this department and with this program is that it has no strategy and no plan. It is a continuing series of "ad hocery". It just has not worked and it just cannot work.

May I also say this to give the context in which I do my thinking about regional disparity. In a federal country like Canada in particular, one of the major duties of a central government is to seek plans, policies and programs, to equalize opportunity and to equalize conditions of life for all Canadians irrespective of where they may happen to live. One of the major duties of this government is to make sure the people of the Atlantic provinces, the Indians and Eskimos in their communities, the people in the Gaspé area of Quebec and other regions of that province, the people in northern Ontario and indeed the people in every part of Canada will have, if not exactly the same opportunity—perhaps that is not possible—and not exactly the same condition of life—perhaps that is not possible—at least will have a really humane basis for existence, with the gap between the poor and rich regions and the gap between the poor and rich groups in this country being constantly narrowed. That must be the objective of any decent society, any just society, any incentive society, any grand society and all the adjectives which have been used by Liberals and Conservatives in my opinion to bamboozle the people of Canada. Surely, this should be the major objective of the central government.

I assume in a spurt of concern, which the Prime Minister has not shown since, the Prime Minister made his only specific commitment or promise during the federal election of 1968. I say this is a spurt of concern which has not been in evidence ever since. That one commitment was that he would do something about regional disparity. I believe he used a more flowery expression. He was going to give every Canadian the same position and the same opportunity in the just society he was going to start building. That was the only, at least major, specific undertaking the Prime Minister made during the election of 1968. I say with sadness and sorrow that the fact is there has

[Mr. Lewis.]

been no progress at all made on that. Instead of progress there has been a wastage of funds, there has been a lack of plans and there has been a total lack of any industrial or economic strategy.

• (1210)

The other day Professor McAllister of Dalhousie University in a recent speech in Ottawa—and I understand that Professor McAllister is occasionally used by the Department of Regional Economic Expansion because of his knowledge and expertise in the area—made this typically professorial understatement when he said:

At present the pickings or threads of regional strategies that can be stuck together have an incomplete and unconvincing flavour.

Only a professor could have put it that gently. What the professor meant, I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, is that the regional strategies consisted only of pickings and of threads and that they made no pattern at all. That is the truth of the situation at present. We had designated areas and then we had special areas and then we had other areas, with the result that the department now has areas of one sort or another that cover over 50 per cent of Canada's population. Montreal, a large part of Quebec in addition to the Atlantic provinces and other parts of other provinces have been brought under the umbrella. The result is, of course, that there is no sense in the situation. The growth centre concept is gone, the designated area concept is gone. You have a dog's breakfast of all types of special and designated areas that are given some kind of consideration here or there, and nothing of value is happening.

The other day the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion told us—I forget exactly on what date but it was very recently—that 50,000 jobs had been created by the incentive program. The Prime Minister, during his speech in the debate on the Throne Speech, said that the department had spent \$907 million in the three years of its existence and 50,000 jobs had been created. I am not saying that the 50,000 jobs are related to the \$907 million; they relate to much less than that, but the fact is that the department has spent over \$900 million in the three years of its existence. The minister says that 50,000 jobs were created. Can he tell us how many net jobs were created? Can he give us the figures as to how many net jobs there are and how many jobs were lost as a result of his programs? Was that figure reduced to 20,000 or 15,000 or 30,000? It has been reduced considerably.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Only two jobs.

Mr. Lewis: What the minister's department has done as a result of the lack of strategy or plan, has been to make it possible for the Duplate Company to transfer its operation from Oshawa to Hawkesbury. The result is that there is a more modern plant in Hawkesbury which will employ fewer people and the plant in Oshawa which employed more people than the Hawkesbury plant will close. The same was done in the case of Aerovox which was transferred from Hamilton, Ontario to Amherst, Nova Scotia, and in the case of Union Carbide a plant was transferred from Welland, Ontario to Beauharnois, Quebec. Then, there is the Findlay Company in Carleton Place which closed its plant quite recently when the parent company,