

Regional Development Incentives Act

economic plan. The city of Yorkton—and Yorkton is but one example—has sent briefs and letters to the minister outlining the economic situation in that city, and asking that Yorkton qualify for additional incentives to attract industry to the area. Yet Yorkton has not been included in the plan.

I should like to know why this is the case. I should like to know also why other communities in Saskatchewan were not included in the plan. Perhaps a little light would be cast on the situation by the correspondence that passed between the provincial and federal governments in relation to regional economic development and the choice of designated areas. But apparently the Provincial Government did not see fit to send any correspondence.

I could go on at great length to talk about different problems in Saskatchewan, and advance further arguments for designating the whole province of Saskatchewan, but in view of the time element and the fact that other people want to participate in the debate I will try to be as brief as possible. I hope that the announcement made yesterday by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion was not mere tokenism on the part of the government. Because if it was, this will mean nothing to the people of Saskatchewan in areas now within the new regional development plan. When the Parliamentary Secretary replies to the debate, perhaps he could tell the House whether or not the new special areas will be treated on the same basis as the old areas originally designated under the plan announced last August. I hope that the announcement that has just been made will not be a paper announcement. These areas need more than that; they need help immediately. Not only is the economic life of the province failing, but the entire way of life of hundreds of thousands of people is being affected.

Mr. Martin P. O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us is a request for the production of papers passing between the government of Canada and the province of Saskatchewan in connection with the designation of certain regions of Saskatchewan under the new incentives plan. There is no such correspondence, Mr. Speaker. I informed the hon. member who raised the question of that some months ago, and I now have to inform him once again that no such correspondence exists.

[Mr. Nystrom.]

Some hon. members will probably be surprised to learn that this situation is not unique to Saskatchewan; the same situation obtains in all of the other provinces with regard to designation of various regions, with the exception of the province of Alberta. There was some consultation between officials of the department and their counterparts in each of the provinces. These consultations resulted, not without friction in some cases, in some consensus.

Section 3 of the Regional Development Incentives Act requires consultation in such matters. It does not require agreement between the two governments concerned in any particular case, but it does call for consultation. In this case there was a desire to get on with the job as quickly as possible, to have a rapid commencement in view of the high promise of the programs of this department, and therefore discussions were entered into between the officials. These discussions were oral. I repeat that, except in the case of Alberta where there was some disagreement between the officials and some correspondence did result and was tabled in the House on December 15 in response to a request from the hon. member who moved this motion, there is no other correspondence.

The reason for the lack of correspondence was in order to avoid any sort of confrontation, if at all possible; to avoid the kind of situation where there is proposal and counter-proposal. Many officials of the federal government travelled to the provinces in order to conduct these consultations. In the very co-operative environment that existed, agreement, or at least a consensus, was sufficiently reached to enable the federal government, as was its responsibility, to designate certain regions.

In view of the fact that there is no such correspondence, Mr. Speaker, I feel I ought to ask the hon. member whether he would agree to withdraw his motion.

Mr. Burton: Mr. Speaker, before the hon. member resumes his seat, might I ask him a question? I quite recognize what the Parliamentary Secretary has said about consultations between provinces, the value of discussion, and that no formal agreement following consultation is required. However, in view of the fact that consultations were held and that information about the proposals passed between the federal government and the province of Alberta, why was it that in answer to questions that I placed on the order paper in regard to consultations with other