

interest from which some very concrete results have flowed and will continue to flow?

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question for the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy), who has a distinguished track record when it comes to economic development when he was a Minister in the former Government.

Would the Hon. Member care to comment on the operative word of the Throne Speech, which was "consultation"? Shortly afterward, the Minister made his economic statement in which he announced some very massive cuts. I believe that in excess of \$1.7 billion was reduced from the regional economic development envelope.

Would the Hon. Member comment on that, in view of the fact that there have been a great number of regions in Canada, including the Atlantic, Manitoba and parts of Quebec, that have been greatly affected by those cut-backs, which were made without any consultation whatsoever with the Canadian people, the provincial Premiers or Members of Parliament? One example of these cut-backs is the winter ferry services in Yarmouth, from Bar Harbour to Maine. That was cut unilaterally by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) without any consultation. Would the Hon. Member comment on such tactics by the Conservative Government?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his good memory and kind compliments about the past record.

Let me point out to the House that it was only approximately six or seven weeks ago that the Hon. Member for Cape Breton-East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall) and I had the opportunity to consult with members of the Atlantic Economic Council who, during the course of those meetings, clearly pointed out that a continuation and strengthening of the IRDP was essential to the economic well-being of the Atlantic province. Through such programs, direct grants would go to individual businesses in those areas to give them the opportunity to start and develop new enterprises. However, we have seen that such action runs totally contrary to what the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion is proposing.

It would be a very sad day for regions like Atlantic Canada, northern Quebec, northern Ontario and the western regions on budget day next Thursday if the Minister has once again lost out and the IRDP has been eviscerated and cut back, reduced or transferred so that the federal Government has withdrawn even further from its ability or capacity to provide for an over-all economic plan to help those regions.

It is our hope that this debate will serve to let Members opposite take strong notice that if a further reduction of the IRDP is contemplated in the Budget and its replacement with some kind of tax incentive system, the poorer economic regions of Canada that are trying to improve themselves with federal assistance and co-operation will be sadly and sorely dismayed. It would only prove the case we have seen in the last nine months that the Government does not care.

Supply

Mr. Mayer: Mr. Speaker, I wish to respond briefly to the comments of the Hon. Member about the direction of the Canadian Wheat Board. It is very interesting to look at his record when he was Minister of Transport and later Minister responsible for the Wheat Board. During his term, grain exports through Churchill went down over 30 per cent, from exports of a little over 600,000 tonnes in 1983 to a little over 400,000 tonnes when he was the Minister responsible.

It is very interesting to note that this happened at a time when Canada experienced record exports. If one wants to look at the record of the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) when he was responsible for Churchill, it is very dismal. Use of the port went down close to 30 per cent at the same time that we had record exports.

If we want to talk about commitments to the Port of Churchill and at that Member's record when he was the Minister responsible, it is a very dismal record and anything but the distinguished track record that was referred to by the Member for Cape Breton-East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall).

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, in a record of the many dumb statements made, the Minister's statement that exports dropped for three weeks when I was Minister of the Wheat Board is about the dumbest he has ever made. To try to blame the fallen exports on that administration is ludicrous.

He did not mention that when I was Minister I negotiated and signed a \$93 million agreement which put Churchill back on the road for the first time. The Minister and his colleagues are totally undermining that achievement, and that is the Government's record. That is what is actually taking place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The period for questions and comments has expired.

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, in this debate, I think it is necessary to come back to the motion that the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) has put before the House. I noticed that he really did not touch on his own motion but seemed to use this as an opportunity to make statements that I suggest are perhaps among the most irresponsible that have ever been made in the House.

The reason I believe we should get back to the tone of the motion is that the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry referred to an article that he read in a newspaper that made it appear as though I were an interventionist. This alarmed him and he said that I was more of an interventionist than even our socialist friends to the Hon. Member's left.

He did not specifically say that I was more of an interventionist than the Trudeau Liberals or the Turner Liberals, but I think that was the implication.

The motion before the House reads:

That this House condemns the Government for undermining the will of Parliament and the Legislatures by failing to use industrial, decentralization, agricultural, transportation and equalization policies as well as its Crown Corporations to further economic development in all communities across Canada.