

Government Organization

expired. If it is the disposition of the committee that he continue—

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Broadbent: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I shall try to be brief. I was saying that the new department would not really deal with the problem of poverty in the urban centres. In addition, I am convinced that in the foreseeable future it will not be dealing in any meaningful way with the poverty associated with regional economic disparity. I say this because the current estimates provide an increase of only \$37 million for the purpose of dealing with economic disparity. This comes to less than the price of a movie ticket for every Canadian; it is the price of 20 pop-sicles for every Canadian. I suggest this is a disgracefully small figure, scarcely enough to deal with poverty in one small region let alone with the poverty which exists in many regions spread across the country.

I should like to conclude by making two additional proposals. I should be glad to hear the minister's comments on the suggestion now being put forward by a number of economists that it would be desirable to introduce a variable monetary policy in Canada at this time. Is there any good economic reason why we should establish the same interest rates in British Columbia, Ontario and the maritimes? Perhaps the government should give careful consideration to instituting a variable monetary policy in line with the varied economic conditions which exist in this country.

The second suggestion I should like to make concerns community involvement. One of the encouraging aspects of recent ARDA and FRED agreements has been a recognition of the importance of community participation. I think the government is to be commended in this regard. Of course, if people are to play a meaningful role in working out their own fate there are bound to be delays in the planning and decision-making process. However, there can be no doubt that both in personal and economic terms the benefit should be greater. People gain in self-respect, and the economy gains by having men and women personally committed to work projects.

The government should extend this involvement principle beyond ARDA and FRED and make it a central aspect of all its programs aimed at overcoming regional economic differences. Ordinary people all round the world, particularly in the industrially advanced nations, are now challenging all

[The Chairman.]

forms of authoritarian paternalism. We should welcome this trend. Indeed, we should foster it. And one of the best places to begin is with our own government programs.

• (4:00 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Chairman, first of all, as I have not yet had an opportunity to do so, may I offer my congratulations to the new Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. He has worked towards the establishment of this department and he certainly deserves our admiration.

This is, I believe, a very judicious undertaking. Of course, it will not solve all problems; it is inconceivable, in this day of very complex administrative processes, that all problems can be dealt with at once.

In any event, this will be a useful tool, an essential one for a modern government that wishes to solve the dramatic problem facing Canadians today, that is regional disparity.

Mr. Chairman, Canadians from all parts of the country should share equally in the economic expansion of the nation. One region should not benefit from this at the expense of the others, as was the case under the former concept of regional development. That is the whole problem.

Successive governments, Mr. Chairman, have favoured the economic development of certain well-defined regions, while vast areas, more or less densely populated and generally well-provided with natural resources, were deprived of financial assistance from the government or of participation in regional development programs.

To give one example of particular interest to Quebecers, I shall mention Montreal which for the people of Quebec is a marvelous and extraordinary city with almost unlimited possibilities in international, industrial, commercial and other areas. For the rest of the province, this city is an economic monster that swallows up all the initiatives other regions could possibly undertake. Montreal today represents a menace to the economic growth of central Quebec, of the Gaspé, Abitibi, Quebec City area, etc.

We do not hold it against Montreal. Far from it. The city of Montreal must expand. The economic development of the metropolitan area must be sustained and progressive.

But, Mr. Chairman, the other parts of Quebec must not be forgotten. The Ottawa region—Pontiac-Témiscamingue—could be mentioned as just another example of an area far behind economically, so we can say