

*Government Organization*

who sit in various parts of the house. However, I think there will be general agreement when I say that the ideal toward which we must work is to ensure that Canadians have good opportunities to earn their living at roughly comparable standards wherever they live from sea to sea.

Canada as a nation can no longer live with the extremes of inequality which some people now must face simply because they are citizens of one part of Canada rather than another. Indeed, we cannot make the unity and identity of Canada secure unless we can remove the large disparities in the conditions of life in the regions of our country.

The recent constitutional conference recognized this point and clearly confirmed the importance which the federal government and the provincial governments attach to the objective of equality of opportunities for Canadians everywhere. The job of the new department, therefore, must be to get down to the roots of the problems which have produced the existing disparities between regions of Canada and help make the basic economic and social changes needed to create new employment and earning opportunities, and to make those opportunities available to the people who need them.

To put it another way, the department's goal will be to ensure that economic growth is dispersed widely enough across Canada to bring employment and earnings opportunities in the hitherto slow growth regions as close as possible to those in the rest of the country. Everyone knows that this is a difficult objective to attain. We have had a variety of programs operating independently, with too little co-ordination between them. This approach has obviously not worked. It may have stopped the gaps between regions from widening but it has not narrowed them.

This legislation will, therefore, firmly charge the new department, and myself as its first minister, with the central responsibility for federal regional development programs. This is the only way to secure the co-ordination of federal effort which is essential to the achievement of the most effective results.

With co-ordination we must have flexibility. The particular needs differ for different areas. The new department must be able to take a flexible approach, to look at the problems of an area or a region of Canada and to take action specifically designed to overcome those problems and to create new and self-sustaining expansion.

[Mr. Marchand (Langeller).]

The organization legislation, of course, merely establishes the structure. The important thing is that it is a structure which will enable us to take this kind of a new approach.

[*Translation*]

This bill, Mr. Chairman, provides for the establishment of special areas when employment opportunities are very limited in the region itself or in the territory of which that region is a part.

This will promote assistance to the growth centres where economic expansion can be realized for the greatest benefit of the whole region. Up until now, those centres have often been left out of the federal aid programs.

The global planning concept contained in FRED will be extended to regions other than rural ones and will become one of the principal instruments capable of promoting economic growth.

The department—at least in the initial stage of its operations—will give priority to industrial development projects intended primarily for growth centres. However, we aim at the same time to focus our attention on social rehabilitation measures intended for rural regions.

The department will set up development plans for special areas in cooperation with other departments and will use, wherever possible, the services and facilities of such departments.

The department will coordinate federal activities to implement development programs and to carry out these portions of the programs which other departments are unable to undertake.

Although it should not necessarily be specified in the bill, one of the first responsibilities of the department will be the creation, at the official level, of the inter-departmental structure needed for efficient coordination.

Rural development must be accomplished through a federal-provincial process, because it comprises a wide range of activities involving both levels of government. The act therefore insists on the co-operation with the provinces and the participation of local groups in the drawing up and implementation of development programs for special areas. In order to better ensure that co-operation with the provinces, I intend to move, during the debate, an amendment to clause 26 (1) so that this co-operation might become a reality.