

Regional Unemployment

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. minister that his allotted time has expired. He may continue, however, with unanimous consent. Does the minister have unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Lessard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

An hon. Member: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. There was definitely a "no" from the opposition side.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Clarke)—Urban Affairs—Granville Island, Vancouver—Future of property and purpose of expenditure; the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt)—Energy—Mackenzie Valley pipeline—Possibility of request by Arctic Gas for government guarantee to raise capital; the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche)—External Affairs—Conference on International Economic Co-operation—Request for progress report.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58—ALLEGED FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):

That, in the opinion of this House, the government's abandonment of its commitment to develop strong regional economies, and its failure to give priority to regional needs in designing national fiscal, transport, energy and trade policies, has resulted in a crisis of economic stagnation and unprecedented unemployment in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry the minister was not given time to finish his remarks, because I was looking forward to his explaining how he and the government are going to eliminate regional disparity in three years. That seems to be the implied undertaking in the new arrangements which have been made with respect to

[Mr. Lessard.]

unemployment insurance. In other words, the government has recognized the need to make allowances for differences in regions, but only after a period of three years. I am sorry that the minister did not tell us this afternoon—I came here fully expecting he would do so—how the government proposes to eliminate regional disparities within the next three years.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the Minister dealt with quite a number of topics today. He spotlighted many of them, but there are so many other very important things that he should lay down on the table. He tried to explain the rate of unemployment in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. For instance, these problems did exist in Quebec before the election of a separatist, secessionist government. They developed under a Liberal government in Ottawa and a Liberal government in Quebec. The policy of the Canadian government with respect to alleviating regional disparities was and still is a mixture of improvisation and inconsistency. Unemployment is rampant. Its rate has reached the 10 per cent mark. In Quebec it is causing great anxiety especially among young people. And in that province, unemployment increases skepticism and even cynicism towards federalism. That is something really tragic for our country.

• (1700)

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to be entirely critical of the minister and his department this afternoon, he will be pleased to know. I have already heard him criticized by his own supporters for increasing disparity within the regions.

An hon. Member: He should be.

Mr. Stanfield: Perhaps he should be. I think one of the mistakes his department has made, as I look across the country, is that it and the government, rather than concentrating on the economy of regions, has attempted to reach down into communities and make itself responsible for the rapid growth of communities. I suggest that the minister and the government are not responsible for ensuring the rapid growth of every city, community and constituency in this country, although there will certainly be instances such as Stephenville and Sydney at the present time where events will be of such urgency and so beyond the capability of the province to deal with that the federal government will wish to become involved.

I simply say that in my judgment the Department of Regional Economic Expansion should concentrate on regional economic development. In a sense, it has been trying to do too much and this is perhaps one of the reasons it has had so little success in generating dynamism in the regions of slow growth, particularly in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec.

As to the Atlantic region, I do not see it as the responsibility of the minister at the present time to ensure equality of development in the near future throughout the region or in every community or every constituency. I admit that when I was premier of Nova Scotia it was recognized that some parts of the province lent themselves more readily to successful