

National Economic Development Board

Works; I know you will recognize its urgency. Does the minister expect to be in a position to introduce an amendment to the National Housing Act before the Christmas recess to provide for financing of existing homes?

Hon. E. D. Fulton (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, the only amendment to the National Housing Act which we have so far said we will be introducing is the one dealing with the extension of the rebate period in connection with the development of sewage projects. The actual time when that will be brought forward will, of course, rest with the leader of the house.

Mr. Garland: Perhaps the minister did not hear my question. It was with respect to amending the National Housing Act to provide for the financing of existing homes.

Mr. Fulton: I have nothing to add to the answer I have already given.

NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

PROVISION FOR DEFINITION OF DUTIES, APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS, ETC.

Hon. Paul Martineau (for the Minister of Finance), moved the second reading of Bill No. C-87, to provide for the establishment of a national economic development board.

(Translation):

He said: Mr. Speaker, in submitting this legislation to the house, the government, first of all, want, through this national development board, to obtain all information which will help ready its objective, that is, a continual economic development for Canada, and therefore, also consolidate the position of this country in the fields of finance and trade, and finally attain a higher level of production and employment.

Without putting any limitation on the objectives I just mentioned, this legislation will more particularly promote long term prospects for development in this country, provide the necessary stimulation of its economic activities, as well as give an opportunity of considering special projects of national importance, in which the federal government would financially, or otherwise, participate as the case may be.

As far as those special projects are concerned, it would certainly be necessary to provide for priorities as the need may arise in each part of the country, according to a master plan for the development of our resources and considering the greater availability of means due to the development of every sector of our national economy.

I think those objectives include other aims, like for instance, a co-ordination of activities by all organizations serving Canada's development; a study of the means to make the maximum use of our resources and facilities for production as well as a forecast of our economic development rate in every field, for a long period of time, whether it be ten, 20 years or more. Finally, those aims include suggesting to the government the practical details which would in each case help achieve the proposed development.

As I say, and provide for, the creation of such an advisory body whose main task will be to advise the government on planning and on the means of development I just mentioned.

Thus, a great number of experts, of businessmen, of professionals, of university members, in short, of all the talents which are to be found in this country will be put to the service of the nation so as to ensure what is, I believe, the purpose of every member in this house, the maximum development of our resources.

Mr. Speaker, some people might wonder whether the government, in proposing the establishment of this national economic development board, is not going in for state planning.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is quite out of the question for the government and the party I belong to have stated several times and in no uncertain terms their position on this matter. If, by planning, these people mean the normal results of government direction where the government would take over the control of production means, then we are against that proposal, for such a planning could only lead to socialism, whether disguised or not, and to control measures which do not fit in with our history and our Canadian spirit, and which would lead to a form of control that we could not tolerate in a free enterprise system. No, Mr. Speaker.

This government has been and still is a champion of free enterprise in the best sense of the word. But, this does not mean that we should not have guide posts to promote the development of those vast resources which are the heritage of all Canadians.

I believe that we must set up an over-all plan for the development of our resources and the expansion of our economic activity. We must also find the solution to certain problems of the economic life of the nation. That is why the government wishes to take a new step towards their solution by submitting this proposal to this house.