

*Economic Development*

word "supported"—by government. In the time I have available to me in this debate I cannot cover all the ground we hope to achieve with this new ministry, but perhaps I can try to capture the essence of what we have in mind.

In the 23 task forces, industry by industry—the pulp and paper industry, the footwear, textile industries and so on—I think for the first time since I have been around the scene chief executive officers of companies met with the most senior line unions to discuss their mutual problems, with the view in mind that the industry would be healthier, profits would improve, that as a result wages would be better and, above all, that more jobs would be created. There was an umbrella committee called tier two which was made up of five selected people from labour and five selected people from business, with a neutral chairman supported by an academic.

In the earlier process, called tier one, there were some 305 business firms across the country, some 28 or 30 unions represented and a dozen universities. In my view they reached an amazing degree of consensus about a lot of practical things, in each case affecting their industries. The tier two committee examined all of these and was tied in its mandate to dealing with those recommendations and, finally, to producing an over-all report.

There are two things I wish to illustrate from these events. First, the encouragement we should all take from the fact that senior members of the trade union movement and senior executives from business are meeting and have reached a high degree of consensus about a number of important matters. They have had their disagreements and will continue to have them. But I have talked to people from both groups and I find there is a degree of trust and respect for each other that before I did not think existed. Out of this process, which was started by the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, came 800 or 900 recommendations about what governments, both federal and provincial, should do.

That was the reason for establishing a co-ordinating ministry. The recommendations covered almost every program in every department and agency of the federal government as well as the very important and significant part played by the provincial governments. And a line ministry, even through interdepartmental committees of deputies and officials, was not geared to respond to this kind of constructive but all-inclusive and all-embracing series of recommendations.

Another significant factor was that some of these recommendations—more than a few—were recommendations that the federal government initiate programs or change policies which already exist. The people who were involved in the process worked diligently and are clever and responsible people. But we have to face the fact that they did not know that several of the programs they were recommending already existed. Therefore our delivery system, our information system as to what is available, obviously needs to be pulled together in a more cohesive and more readily available fashion. This is necessary in order to do the job of assisting the reconstruction and making the structural changes needed to give industry the help it needs by sector or by region.

● (1412)

I have used that example as an indication of my cautious enthusiasm for what we can do, as an illustration of why it is necessary to put in a co-ordinating mechanism, and also as an illustration of one of the most urgent tasks that my new board should undertake, which is the response to those sectoral task forces and tiers. After all, that covered mainly the manufacturing sectors, and today, by virtue of the apparent or potential success of that process, provided we respond substantively and responsibly, there are other groups in this country wishing to get in on the same process. To me that is a very healthy sign that there is something going on between labour, industry and business in this country supported by government which is worth nurturing.

I want to make a very definite point about this, not to overuse this issue except by way of illustration. I would not call it a partnership between labour and management because that would be overstating the case. There is a tenuous, potentially growing respect of one for the other which we must nurture, and both sides have indicated personally to me and to others that they want to see this process continue. There are great benefits to Canada, to labour and to business from the continuation of that kind of consultation, but it has to proceed in a balanced way. Labour cannot be party to this as an afterthought or in any sense of tokenism. They have to be respected for the constructive suggestions they will contribute to the process.

The businessmen I have been talking to who have been working with them on this fully understand. I cannot speak for them but my impression is that they will support it. For some others it may be a bogey, but we want it fully understood that this will be a balanced consultation and there will be no tokenism. In fact, the more that is recognized by labour, the more suggestions and constructive participation will be forthcoming from labour.

I am very conscious of the fact that there is another speaker who wishes to take part in this debate. One could talk for hours about what our intentions are.

Hon. members have before them the legalistic version of the mandate of the board in the order in council. I want to touch on two or three of these items to clarify some points that have already been made. The definition of an integrated federal approach is one of them. It seems to me that even just taking the consultative process I have described as a way of a significant illustration, the need for that is extremely apparent. I think the same thing applies to the question of developing better mechanisms by a political body which, if necessary, bangs heads together but, from a political point of view, reaches consensus on policies to be adjusted between departments.

Another responsibility I have is to meet with provincial governments to see whether duplication, overlaps and gaps can be tidied up between us.

The other item is the question of the Treasury Board. I do not think anybody in the House respects the importance and