

Regional Development Incentives Act

enjoying some degree of independence. Such a board might examine how the act is being administered and make helpful recommendations from time to time. If men and women from labour and management with experience in the development of industry were to sit on the board, the board would be useful to the minister. Many minds in this country would be set at rest to some extent as to the way ministerial discretion is exercised. The board might continue to be helpful in making suggestions as to how administration under the act could be improved.

There is another aspect of administration on which the minister did not dwell. It is vitally important for people who are trying to promote industrial growth in a particular area, and for the industrialists concerned, to know as precisely as possible just what aid is available. It is important for the highest degree of certainty to be provided in this regard. If those concerned with the matter do not have that degree of certainty it will be difficult for those on the promotional side of the program to work effectively. It is unlikely that industrialists will wait too long in obtaining answers as to how much help is available. Industry will be confronted with a decision. An industrialist may want to build a plant and he may have a variety of locations from which to choose. Locations in designated areas will be considered, but he will not wait too long for answers. Industry may not be prepared even to consider establishing itself in designated areas unless someone who is interested in the area can say from the outset pretty specifically what help is available. It may be that no industrialist will be prepared to go through the long process of finding out what aid is available. He may not wish to wait months and months before finally getting an answer from the minister, only to find that the answer from the company's viewpoint is unsatisfactory. Unless the minister and his staff can introduce into this program far more certainty than they seem to have in mind, it may be difficult to entice industrialists to go through the long and uncertain process of finding out what aid will be available to them.

I know the minister feels there is need for flexibility. If industry is to develop in certain areas it will need to be certain about help available to it. Yet, there is a danger here. It stems of necessity from the manner in which the program is to be set up. The program involves a very high degree of centralization. Nearly all decisions must in some way go

[Mr. Stanfield.]

through the minister. The minister is responsible for virtually every decision that is to be made. It is true that much of the spade work can be done by those working with him, but there will be a highly centralized exercise of discretion and there is a real danger that a bottleneck will develop because the legislation now being considered is not the only legislation the minister must administer. He must administer general legislation relating to regional economic development. That, too, involves the exercise of many other kinds of discretion. He will have many other things to consider.

The aid that is available must be reduced to writing, so that people can understand it. It will not be reduced to writing, perhaps, if the minister exercises his discretion too much. The greater the extent to which the minister exercises his discretion, the greater will be the danger that bottlenecks develop. I hope this does not happen. Conceivably the minister could become the greatest bottleneck in the country and I would not want that to happen.

Again I urge the importance, sir, of having the discretion under the bill translated as rapidly as possible into rules which will enable people to know where they fit. The rules will have the added effect of reducing the exercise of discretion on the part of the minister. Everybody concerned will thus be greatly facilitated in deciding how to proceed.

It is difficult to overemphasize this point, sir. So far as possible, the rules I have mentioned should be simple and clearcut. The minister worries, quite properly, about big money being wasted. He feels that in exercising his discretionary powers he ought to head off businessmen trying to get money they do not really need. I admire the minister in this respect, and the public will appreciate his motives. But let me suggest, sir, that as a result of the minister's desire to make sure no person receives money he is not entitled to, so many complexities may be introduced into the program that many people will not bother with it. Let me suggest this, too. The public has a great interest in this program and its best interest is served by making the program work. From the point of view of the Canadian taxpayer, the value of the program will be measured by the results it produces. We must be sure it produces results.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: I have made this suggestion in the hope the minister will not set up so