

*Supply—Regional Development*

that we will tackle seriously, and then we will tell them what we are going to do.

We have been down that road before, and we only have to look back to see how unsuccessful it has been. I think that if we are going to take this seriously, what should be done even now before this department is fully formed and so structured that there is little room for manoeuvrability, is to have the kind of full and frank public discussions that are badly needed. The Economic Council of Canada in its latest report put it very clearly when talking about regional development when it said that full participation of provincial governments in the planning exercise, as well as in subsequent decision making and implementation, is essential. This is where I fault the minister and his departmental officials. If there has been such a discussion, it has been held in the greatest secrecy. We have had some secret meetings in the past, but this will take the cake because even the vaunted sleuthing of Peter C. Newman has not been able to unearth useful conversations and consultations at this level. Even if they have taken place, their validity would have been questioned, inasmuch as many public bodies closely interested and concerned in this issue have not been called upon to participate. I refer to a few that come to my mind, bodies such as the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, the Nova Scotia Voluntary Economic Planning Board and various industrial estates that operate as crown corporations in the Atlantic provinces, to mention the ones with which I am most familiar. Seemingly we have not come close to tackling this, but instead have followed the usual federal pattern of failure by evolving our plans here. We have evolved our plans in Ottawa and then stated that it was our position, like it or lump it.

I want to turn now to one specific agency under the minister's responsibility, which I am afraid is going to disappear and perhaps even create less of an opportunity for effective consultation and co-operation with the Atlantic region. I am referring to the Atlantic Development Board. Rumours have it that this board will cease to exist as an autonomous board. It may have some kind of an advisory capacity, but that will be a pretty limited function. For the last six years now the Atlantic Development Board has been dispensing money on a variety of projects without too much rationalization, except for the oft stated remark that all of this will be useful in the future development of the Atlantic region. It is strange that we have actually

spent tens of millions of dollars in the Atlantic region without having any kind of plan or system whereby we might effectively evaluate whether or not we have been putting our money in the right places, or getting any value from it.

One of the most important things that the Atlantic Development Board could have done, and yet might do, is to produce some kind of plan, and yet we are told that to date we have a series of unco-ordinated surveys, and far too little consultation with those who have done similar work either at the provincial or at the federal level. More than a year ago the then minister of national health and welfare, the present Minister of Manpower and Immigration, indicated that we might be very close to having such a plan. However, it has not yet seen the light of day, and we are told that by the first of next year all we will have is a series of studies. I can speak for part of the maritimes that I know best. We have been studied to death, and what we want now is a little concrete planning, some direct planning, some planning that says something about the goals and priorities that can, should and will be achieved.

There are a couple of other things that I would like to refer to briefly because I think they are important to the future success of this department, and I have not written off its success yet. I am simply stating here that the concern that many people have that this is nothing more than a shuffling process is becoming more and more fortified by the lack of a clearcut statement by the minister, and the lack of open discussion, effective consultation and real planning with the various provincial and municipal bodies that will have to participate. In many cases if regional development is to be more than just a slogan or the title of a new department, this process must take place.

I think also that we must realize that what will be done and what is being done now in the joining of any of these programs will not be sufficient in itself. What should concern the members of this house and what will concern all of those interested in regional development is the question as to what effect all government policies having to do with productivity, with income and unemployment are tailored to get at these pocket areas of regional disparity across the country, what kind of effective machinery will operate at an inter-departmental level, for instance, to effectively co-ordinate the kind of decisions that may be made, not only in abandoning certain things,

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