

Government Organization

have had the week end to consider the problem I posed with this amendment, may I remind the minister what he said to me. Although he was not happy with the way in which the amendment was drawn up, he said he could assure us that this obviously was the intent of the government in reorganizing the department and appointing him as minister. However, I think it would be necessary, in view of what I and the minister in fact have termed the failures of the government in the past to grapple adequately with problems of regional disparity in this country, to set up some clearcut machinery in the statute. This was obviously felt to be one of the important needs in the establishment of the FRED program, which was the last phase in an attempt to deal with problems of regional disparity. Although the FRED board might have been inadequate, at least it was an attempt to put into the statute some form of machinery which would in effect get beyond the separate empires or the kind of ghetto mentality that often operates in various government departments as opposed to a co-ordinated monetary and fiscal policy. If the minister is not prepared to accept this amendment, as seemed to be the case on Friday, I hope he has arrived in the chamber with some concrete alternative proposal. If he has such a proposal, I would be happy to withdraw this amendment in its favour.

● (8:10 p.m.)

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): It is clear in clause 25 of the bill that there has to be co-operation between the departments of government and the agencies involved. If we read the clause, we find it says this:

In exercising his powers and carrying out his duties and functions under section 23, the minister shall, in co-operation with other departments, branches and agencies of the Government of Canada, formulate plans for the economic expansion and social adjustment of special areas.

This means I have no choice. If I carry out this provision I shall be bound to co-operate with all these other departments and agencies. As to the means by which I shall do so, I believe it is impossible to say at this stage. What the house appears to want—and I think it is quite right to do so—is to ensure the existence of some kind of mechanism to facilitate this kind of co-operation.

I do not know how I can carry out this provision in the absence of a structure of some kind. The only thing which embarrasses me is that the method suggested by the hon. member for Egmont does not appear to be a good one. After a week, or after a month or

two, it would become evident that it would not work, and this bill would have to be amended. Some kind of structure to ensure co-operation will have to be set up, but it is not likely we shall ever be in a position to write into the law the structure to ensure that this co-operation will take place. If we fail to create this structure, it means we are not carrying out the purpose of the law and, of course, we intend to do so. It would not be wise to make compulsory the setting up of any particular structure at this moment.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I find it surprising to hear the minister suggest that some formula cannot be devised at this point to ensure that co-operation is achieved. After all, this deals with one of the most long standing difficulties in the field of government administration. The problem was admitted when the FRED board was set up two years ago. So, the department has been aware of its existence for a long time.

When the minister told us that under the terms of clause 25 he was obliged to co-operate with other departments, he missed one of the points inherent in this amendment. What we are really concerned about is not that he will fail to co-operate with other ministers, but that other ministers will fail to co-operate with his department.

The hon. gentleman found it difficult to make a clear cut statement this evening. If this amendment is defeated, I wonder if he would agree to report to the house later on the nature of the mechanism which will eventually be set up to deal with this problem. It is important to the effective working of this whole program that the house be appraised in the not too distant future as to the exact nature of the machinery which the department, or the government, or the Governor in Council have devised to ensure that this basic issue of co-operation is dealt with.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I would have no objection, Mr. Chairman, except that if we were to set up a cabinet committee I do not believe I could give the house a list of the ministers appointed to it. This is not done in the case of existing committees.

Under the FRED plan, membership of committees and so on, and the functions of those appointed, can be made known. To this, I would have no objection.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I assume that if a committee is to be effective it will have to comprise more than cabinet ministers. We are all realistic enough to know that if policy