

not know how the Hon. Member himself feels, but I believe if he looks at it objectively, he will see that there have been problems in not getting that development going. I blame partly the Peckford Government, although not entirely.

I cannot say—and I did not say—that the federal Government is not giving patronage and so on. I pointed out that the DRIE program in fact leads to greater patronage and that the DREE program was always infested with patronage. I just said, and I will stand by it, that there has been a difficulty in getting some of the programs going with the provincial governments there because they have not run the programs very well. They have not been particularly well planned governments in dealing with industry in the provinces. I stand by that; and if it hurts to tell the truth, then it may hurt, but it is the truth.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there further questions or comments? The House will now proceed to debate.

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West):** Mr. Speaker, I am not going to deal any further with the remarks of the last speaker because I only have 20 minutes, except to say that I am surprised and disappointed at that particular Hon. Member making those kinds of sweeping statements and generalizations without being in the position to offer any particulars or any proof. I am surprised by him and disappointed with him. However, I do not have the time to spend any further on the subject of the offshore oil, or his allegations.

I might say that it is a disappointment also, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister, who is responsible for overcoming regional disparity in this country, made his own speech and then left this Chamber. It is not very often that regional disparity, and the attempts to overcome it, are debated in this Chamber. We have a chance today for debate because the Opposition chose this day to discuss these very real problems about Atlantic Canada. But the Minister most involved has made his own speech and gone, and there is not here in this House one other Minister of the Government to listen to what we are saying or to attempt to rebut us, or anything else. Mr. Speaker, this illustrates the fact that this Government has even given up any pretence of an attempt to overcome regional disparity in this country.

The Minister who did speak is supposed to be one of the intellects; he is the thinker. He is the Rodin of the Liberal Party, we are told. Well, the Gallup poll today shows us how high he stands. It says 30 per cent of the public would back Turner; 21 per cent, Chrétien; 2 per cent, Roberts; 1 per cent, Munro; 1 per cent, MacGuigan; and only 0.5 per cent would support this alleged thinker of the Liberal Party. That will show you how greatly Liberals esteem thinkers.

This is a motion, Mr. Speaker, which is most serious in its intent. I am going to produce some impartial authority to show how this Government has decided to give up on the battle to overcome regional inequalities across Canada. I want to start by referring to an article by Barry Lesser entitled "Regional Development Matters", in *Policy Options* of November, 1983, which deals with this subject. I want to give some quotations from this article:

### Supply

Regional disparities measured in terms of earned incomes have not been substantially reduced—

And that is over the years since 1968.

—except to the extent that the oil-producing Prairie provinces have gained.

In other words, with respect to "earned incomes", nothing has been gained in this whole so-called battle against regional disparities since the federal Government took up that battle, starting with the present Prime Minister's statement of 1968. The article goes on to point out:

Second, and most important, unemployment has become a national problem; it is no longer confined to pockets within less developed regions.

It was thought that unemployment was a regional problem in the 1960s. However, under the aegis of this Government, unemployment has become a national problem. It is no longer considered to be a regional problem. It applies right across the country, although it is worse, of course, in the Atlantic Provinces, and in my own Province of Newfoundland it is worst of all. The article continues with another conclusion:

In 1968 when the Department of Regional Economic Expansion (DREE) began, its expenditures represented 2 per cent of the federal Budget. In 1980-1981, DREE expenditures were 1 per cent of the federal Budget.

We have already referred to other statistics. Since 1980-1981 there was 1 per cent of the federal budget spent in the battle to overcome regional inequalities. In 1981-1982, 0.9 per cent only; in 1982-1983, 0.6 per cent. Last year, 0.6 per cent. That will show you, Mr. Speaker, how the Government's interest in DREE has diminished and how its spending on DREE has diminished in no uncertain terms, just as this article points out.

● (1240)

Mr. Lesser says the Government's commitment has declined. He then goes on to mention that in January, 1982 the federal Government announced a reorganization. A new ministry, that of DRIE, and another new ministry, that of MSERD, were created. He says the implications of this reorganization are still to be determined. Superficially at least it seems to confirm the hypothesis of a lessening federal commitment to development in the "peripheral regions".

We are a peripheral region in the Atlantic Provinces, Mr. Speaker. It is very clear that there is a lessening federal commitment to developing the peripheral regions. He says that the new structure of these ministries creates the potential for a much greater centralization of decision-making which could mean less sensitivity to the concerns and needs of the region. That is just what has happened, Mr. Speaker. There is no sensitivity to the concerns and needs of the region. Decision-making is more centralized under the new structure.

The author points out that in 1970-71 the Atlantic Provinces accounted for 53 per cent of DREE expenditures. In 1980-81, the figure was 36 per cent. Now the Atlantic Provinces, as my colleague said earlier, are getting less and less of a diminishing amount. Only 36 per cent of all DREE spending in 1980-81 was in the Atlantic Provinces. The author points out that Newfoundland has fared particularly badly since 1980, probably because of the continuing political dispute between New-