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tunately, in spite of all the efforts focussed on this situation by successive administrations, the situation continues to exist in Canada today.

Mr. Speaker, you probably will not remember, but in 1937, the Rowell-Sirois Commission started its inquiry into regional disparity and the Canadian economic union, and at that time, recommendations started being made for providing equal opportunities for all Canadians. The House will also recall that 1957 marked the beginning of equalization payments as we know them today. Also in 1957, the Borden Commission examined the situation of the Maritime provinces and recommended better economic co-ordination in order to help this part of the country.

Mr. Speaker, the real thrust for regional economic development was given in 1969, when the Department of Regional Economic Expansion was established, and I think everyone will remember how this department, with its growing awareness of our various regional situations, has helped the Canadian Government to become an active partner in regional development and to become more sensitive to regional needs including the need to attract more investment to certain less advantaged areas and thus create jobs. The Department's specific terms of reference at the time were to make sure that all federal departments were fully aware of regional aspirations, that regional interests were considered in Cabinet discussions, and that Government policies were tailored to the various regional realities.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Department was also responsible for promoting regional economic development policies and coordinating the activities of other departments. Finally, I think it had quite an impact on decisions made by the many Cabinet committees, in the sense that, more often than not, a decision serving national interests did have a negative impact in certain regions which thus were left to play second fiddle to the rest of the country.

Mr. Speaker, all Members of the House acknowledged as formally as possible the urgency of regional economic development when, in 1981, both major parties unanimously adopted the Canadian Constitution Bill. I am sure we all remember Section 36:

36. (1) Without altering the legislative authority of Parliament or of the provincial legislatures, or the rights of any of them with respect to the exercise of their legislative authority, Parliament and the legislatures, together with the government of Canada and the provincial governments, are committed to

- (a) promoting equal opportunities for the well-being of Canadians;
- (b) furthering economic development to reduce disparity in opportunities; and
- (c) providing essential public services of reasonable quality to all Canadians.

(2) Parliament and the government of Canada are committed to the principle of making equalization payments to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation.

Mr. Speaker, you were a Member of this House when the Bill was adopted, and we all endorse those principles. Since the new Government took office, although the Constitution may

be clear, definite and specific, in practice however, we have every reason to worry.

There has been a sharp increase in the number of IRDP applications turned down since September. Private promoters came to see me with regional economic development case files which were once deemed quite acceptable but which are now rejected for all kinds of considerations.

Of course, the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens) did not further the cause when he agreed to a \$200 million Industrial and Regional Development Program cut-back. I can readily see why applications are refused in ever increasing numbers. That is what has me worried because more and more businessmen and businesswomen come to see us and say: What can we expect! We deal with the federal Government, but DRIE is no longer interested in promoting economic development in the Eastern Townships, DRIE could not care less about job creation in other regions of Quebec. I would suggest that the Minister responsible for the Department considers international trade a more challenging venture. Indeed, he is walking all over his colleague in External Affairs and has downgraded the role of the Minister for International Trade. We all know that. Mr. Speaker, you should go to External Affairs and ask who is the boss. If you see trade commissioners abroad, just ask them who looks after international and trade policies. Most will say it is the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion. He is not satisfied with his small kingdom, he wants more. In fact, Mr. Speaker, you probably remember that he was External Affairs critic when in Opposition, and it does look like he still harbours ambitions in that respect even if the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark) got the job. With that in mind, I think it is unfortunate that the Minister—I would describe him as the stand-in Minister of External Affairs, or the self-appointed Minister for International Trade—does not look after his own bailiwick, which is regional economic development. To put it another way, Mr. Speaker, he is so busy minding other peoples' business that he has precious little time left for his own.

● (1240)

The Minister has made a name for himself, Mr. Speaker. For instance, Mirabel residents, including town councillor Hubert Meilleur, have said that Ottawa's decision to deny funds for upgrading the city's infrastructures is unfair.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Port-Cartier on the North Shore are still waiting for the Minister to stop navel-gazing and make decisions about the future of ITT Rayonier. I know the people in the Gaspé region. Go to Newport and see what they think of the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens).

Mr. Speaker, they all know that the Minister did not dare meet with them, that he dispatched his official interpreter—the Minister of State (Small Businesses) (Mr. Bissonnette)—to mend his fences. Mr. Speaker, nothing has been settled in