

*Government Organization*

the implications of clause 26(2). I am not a lawyer and I know the minister is not a lawyer, but we have many lawyers in the house who will help us. Clause 26(2) clearly states that Ottawa knows best and once the government has made its decision it will announce it from on high and the provinces are expected to follow. The minister is shaking his head indicating that is not true. I think we must have an amendment to make this clear.

I have talked to people who know more about this than I and have been assured that the effect of what is contained in clause 26(2) is to pit the pre-eminent wisdom and authority of the federal government against the full and open co-operation of the provinces. We should not disregard this concept because it is becoming increasingly important. Other bodies, particularly municipalities and regional districts, are important.

I think the intent of the minister's amendment is good. We certainly encourage him to build into this legislation that kind of co-operation we regard as fundamental to an effective program. I am still very much disappointed that the minister has been unable to answer some of the basic questions we have asked in respect of the establishment of the department.

One of the difficulties we all have in dealing with this matter is related to the broadness of the concept of this measure. Almost everything can be included. Perhaps for that reason the minister has been unwilling to give an explanation. To a very large degree this is a new venture and the minister is afraid to answer the very difficult questions involved in it.

Obviously one of the difficult questions is: how are we going to know what standards or criteria are to be adopted in order that the minister in one, two or three years from now can advise members of the opposition as to the effectiveness of this program and this new department? We must have some information at this time as to what the government thinks are the achievable or measurable goals. We are still dealing in a kind of airy-fairy fashion with this matter. We are trying a little of this and a little of that in the hope that something may result.

There is a weakness in the structure of the Atlantic Development Board. It has never really come to grips with the problem of regional disparity. It is rather ironic that the government contemplates the winding up of this board at a time when it is beginning to

tackle important problems that exist in various sectors of the Atlantic region. The board is beginning to show promise in respect of the solution of problems in that area.

The minister has assured us that before the board is wound up the answers to certain questions must be found and that perhaps these answers will be forthcoming when this department gets into operation. Unfortunately the more I hear from people about this concept of regional development the more I become confused. There are many concepts of what is meant by regional development. There are more concepts in this regard than there are people who consider it a suspicious theory. It is not enough for the government to have a whole assortment of theories it may look at from time to time. Because it is committed to certain kinds of action, obviously it must commit itself to certain concepts with regard to regions. It will be crucial for the workings of this department, and for any new programs to be developed within it or other departments, to know what the provinces think about the problems. The government must begin to come to terms with that question.

● (4:50 p.m.)

In my estimation there has not been nearly enough elaboration of the structure of this department. In the comments the minister has made to date there has not been any definite elaboration of what the government plans to do by way of consultation. This has been one of the real weaknesses of all federal programs carried on in the past. Consultation, particularly with the provinces but in many cases with other agencies, has been lacking. In the setting up of this department there is, of course, an attempt to include in it at least some of the basic programs concerned with correcting the whole problem of regional inequality. If I may put this in a general way, one of my overriding concerns after studying this part of the bill is that it seems to be largely centred on industrial development. Certainly no one in the region from which I come is opposed to industrial development. It is a kind of golden word in this age. If you have problems with your economy, if you have a great deal of unemployment and underutilization of people, you immediately start talking about industrial development.

I think there has been a fairly wide consensus that the concept of the growth centre is a good one and in a general way is an advance over what the government has been doing.