

Regional Development Incentives Act

sort of criterion should be established because there is a danger in the funds being lapped up very quickly by these big corporations. They can lap up a huge amount of funds very quickly. Perhaps they will show in terms of the number of people employed that we are genuinely getting value for our money. The fact is that all the employment might be in one area. While one little pocket may be satisfied, countless numbers of small communities may not benefit. One operation may be a small one.

The number of small manufacturers springing up is rather fantastic. Somebody out there is building cupboards or little rock pickers; somebody out there has a new idea for a lift. Ideas are springing up in the minds of people who have creative imaginations but no capital. Perhaps they do not have too much business training, but they know their idea will sell, and eventually they prove themselves. There are many such enterprises across the country. It does not matter if one goes from east to west, from Quebec to Saskatchewan, I am sure there are such enterprises that are good for small communities.

I know of what I speak because I come from a very small community which had no opportunity, so to speak. Just a few miles down the road people started enterprises which really built up the town. Their first concern was how they could do something for the little community. That is good for the country and good for the community. There is local spirit. As these enterprises get bigger and bigger, especially those related to housing, schools and hospitals with their growing staffs, unfortunately they move on to larger areas. But many still remain and will remain, and they are the only things which keep a lot of these small communities alive.

As long as we do not lose sight of the original intent of the bill, to develop areas that do not have opportunities, everything will work out. If we lose sight of it, we will never get any opportunities from private enterprise because there is not a dollar to be made. I do not mind that type of assistance. It is the same as not minding it when we assist the lame or sick. Surely we all have that in our hearts, but we object to money being spent on enterprises which are sometimes questionable. We must have some satisfactory answers.

Another comment I want to make relates to a few enterprises that have been undertaken but sadly have folded. In fact, I could point to a smoked fish operation in my own area. Everything was fine. They had the co-operative fisheries, the fish, and they were right beside the lake. Also they had the great idea that there would be a market. Everything was satisfactory. They had a big opening of the plant. I suppose the "who's who" of the community came in, had a few drinks, made a few speeches, and everything was go. Approximately two weeks later the place folded up because somebody forgot to do a little research on the market possibilities. To this day I am sure one can find operation after operation similar to that.

I can think of a macaroni plant in Saskatchewan which was just another example of failure because of lack of research. I will not dwell on these failures because they will happen; there will always be failures. One can attempt something one thought was a great idea. One can try as one might, and it just

turns out to be a dud in spite of all the planning, thinking, and so on. I am sure the best intentions were there, but when the departments of two levels of government, provincial and federal, are involved, you should have some expertise in order to do better research. I am not going to dwell on this. I will accept that there are failures, but when you do not have satisfactory answers people are turned off.

● (1540)

People are turned off by that type of bureaucracy, if I can call it that. As a result they become cynical, and when they know this department is involved in any program they are inclined to say it is just another one of its operations. This does not mean there are not people involved who are well intentioned and well meaning, but somewhere along the line they get bogged down.

In some of these projects there was probably a certain amount of risk involved. As I have said, I am quite prepared to accept that there are a few failures. I do not want to have to apologize for what has taken place, or for mistakes that have been made, because there have been many successes. One can pick up a newspaper and read all kinds of rumours and speculations about this fellow and that fellow involved in a scandal here and a scandal there. They are scandal sheets, you see, but there are many good things happening in this world that do not make news. The good things are accepted, but if you have a nice talking point for conversation down the corridor or over a coffee roll, and that sort of thing, you can attract people. That sort of thing certainly attracts all the newspapermen because that is what they live on. People being what they are, I suppose they will be making comments along that line from time to time.

I do not want to continue, but I hope that before we get too far into rethinking the whole operation of the department we will have another opportunity to debate this so that other members can bring forward their ideas. I have just put forward a few ideas in the time allotted to me. I am sure there are many others who can put forward examples of things that have occurred in their own areas, and I hope they can present them before we have concluded consideration of this measure. This is a very good department and I wish the minister every success, but I hope the government will find a few more bucks to put into this fund so the department can do everything possible for depressed areas. Anyone who wants to check the books will find that there has not been a single cent put in since the last administration left office.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I believe members of the House are of one mind in wanting to conclude this debate prior to four o'clock and give second reading to the bill. Just let me make one suggestion to the minister, and this suggestion comes from having seen things as they have happened over the years during which DREE has been in operation.

In most cases under the Regional Development Incentives Act, as in the province of Alberta, the designated area line is drawn across the province. In Alberta everything above or