

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

The Federal-Provincial Rural Development Agreement for the interlake area of Manitoba was signed on May 16, 1967. The preamble to the agreement states in part that the two governments "jointly agreed" that the "area have a comprehensive and co-ordinated development plan designed to protect its economic development." The agreement further states that its "objects shall be reached through co-operation between Canada and the province, through co-ordination amongst the parties hereto and their agencies, and by applying all other related or applicable programs and projects to the plan in the area."

Under this program the government of Canada committed itself to spend in excess of \$49 million in the annual appropriation of contributing departments or agencies. The province agreed to contribute in excess of \$35 million as its share of the cost of programs and projects. Surely those passages from the agreement which I have quoted and the sums of money involved demonstrate that the federal government has a responsibility to account for the actions of its agencies as they affect the interlake area. Moreover, the agreement states the following with specific reference to the fisheries:

The problems in the fishery are complex, deep-rooted and interrelated. Fisheries projects should be undertaken only as an integrated package in a comprehensive and carefully phased fisheries adjustment and development program.

That is the agreement, yet the minister argues that an action by a Crown agency which deals the entire plan a devastating blow is of no concern to the government. Surely, if such agreements for the revitalization of underdeveloped areas of the country are to have any meaning, if they are to be able effectively to deal with the problem for which they were devised, they cannot be subjected to distortion, dislocation and emasculation through the unilateral decision of one of the parties to the agreement.

I submit that is what will happen if the processing plant is moved from Selkirk to Winnipeg. If it is done, it will be against the express wishes of the provincial government, against the wishes of the town involved and against the wishes of the people of the interlake as represented by their municipal councils and their area development boards. It is because of the responsibilities of the federal government under the ARDA-FRED agreement for the development of the interlake, because of the total confusion surrounding the economics of the situation and because of the economic and social costs to the people of

[Mr. Rowland.]

the interlake and to the town of Selkirk in particular that the removal of the plan represents, that I argue the matter of the location of the plant is a proper matter for a policy decision on the part of governments and not a proper matter for an administrative decision by an agency which is simply a handmaiden of governments.

It is also a policy decision, because the location of the plant in Winnipeg directly contravenes efforts by the provincial government to decentralize industry in Manitoba with a view to revitalizing its non-urban areas. It is a policy decision which must be made. The minister must make that decision in consultation with his colleagues in the cabinet. He cannot simply tell me to go to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand). I have done that. That minister has done as much as he possibly can under the terms of the legislation governing the operation of his department. Only the cabinet has the necessary mandate from the people of Canada to decide questions of such magnitude.

Finally, the government has the responsibility, if it decides that the plant should be taken from Selkirk, to provide alternate means of employment for the people who would thereby be displaced and compensation to the town of Selkirk which has in good faith expended vast sums of money for a municipality of its size on the basis of undertakings contained in the ARDA-FRED agreements. The government can make such decisions; the corporation cannot. We have a right to expect such socially responsible action from our government and from the minister who represents the government in this instance. It is my contention that he is deliberately avoiding this responsibility. His actions in so doing are utterly deplorable.

• (10:30 p.m.)

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Rowland) would like very much to have a fish plant built in his riding. He says I am not concerned about policy. The policy was clearly laid down when the Freshwater Fish Corporation was set up. That policy is to the effect that the corporation shall manage its affairs in such a way as to produce a maximum return for the fishermen of western Canada.

There are approximately 6,000 fishermen in western Canada. The hon. member for Selkirk is concerned about 100 or 120 workers in