

Regional Development Incentives Act

pens, for example, to companies which were granted aid under the old act? Will they have the deadline extended also, or will they still be required to be in commercial production by December 31, 1976? How many such companies are affected? I think we are justified in asking why there is a need to change this deadline from December 31, 1976 to, December 31, 1981. Is there some study or survey which indicates that this particular deadline is advisable, or has this been done more or less on a hit-and-miss basis?

Let me take this opportunity to suggest to the minister and to put on the record that he should seriously look at the possibility of extending the definition of "industry" to include service and tertiary industries and not merely manufacturing and processing industries. This concept bears looking into because it is particularly hard these days, as the minister well knows, for the people who desire to get into business to pay the very high interest rates which exist and to solve the other complications that have been constantly accumulating over the last few years.

There are many areas such as my constituency where we have a heavy industrial base and a lot of service type industries could be brought into existence, but they do not qualify for aid under DREE. Whether or not some of these industries ought to receive assistance is a question that can, of course, be put in the capable hands of the officials in the regions charged with evaluating the practicality of such assistance. On the other hand, if the definition were enlarged to give a slightly wider scope to this type of application, I think there are many industries in which additional jobs would be created and economic benefits would arise therefrom.

Let me say to the minister again that we on this side of the House wish him well as he gradually becomes more familiar with the many details that comprise his very important portfolio. In the Atlantic region of Canada, in particular—of course, not to the exclusion of other areas of the country—we are looking at DREE constantly to see how it can be of positive benefit to us.

● (1420)

We hope the minister, even with a change in economic climate and the new conditions I mentioned earlier, will be constantly urging his colleagues to give DREE a high priority and continue to try to have DREE extended in the most wise and beneficial way. I know that from time to time he will listen to the suggestions we put forward from this side of the House and evaluate them in a constructive and open-minded way.

Mr. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I too extend my congratulations to the minister on undertaking his new responsibilities. I assure him of the co-operation of this member and of my colleagues in an attempt to attack the very difficult problem of regional disparity. I wish him well in his new ventures.

When this bill comes before the committee I will have some constructive suggestions to put forward in respect of how we can improve the attack on regional disparity. I would ask the minister to attempt to expedite the answers to some questions I have on the order paper, which would enable me to make a more meaningful contribution to the committee. I have about 12 questions dealing with the

[Mr. MacKay.]

department, and while they are comprehensive I would appreciate any effort he could make to obtain the answers before we go to committee.

My feeling is that the federal government should not simply content itself with giving a department such as DREE a limited degree of authority. It should establish machinery which would produce co-ordinated results and which would, in terms of regional economic development, co-ordinate the policies of all departments and bring into focus all departmental policies on the problem of regional disparity. When I speak of departments I think particularly of the Department of Transport and the Department of Finance following the same policies as DREE.

It is really not enough for us to ask other parts of Canada to spend large amounts of money in our area through DREE and then have other departments work contrary to these policies, be they freight rate policies, fiscal or monetary policies. It is this total focus which I think could make a very valuable contribution as part of Canada's policy to solve the problems which exist in all parts of Canada, particularly in the maritimes and some parts of Quebec.

I cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of co-ordinating efforts within departments of the federal government. It is also necessary to co-ordinate the efforts of the federal and provincial governments, especially in the Atlantic region. The three maritime provinces have improved their machinery for inter-provincial co-operation, but we are still a long way from a plan of development for the region in which each provincial government and the federal government would play a co-ordinated role.

Let us first go back to May, 1968, and review the Prime Minister's (Mr. Trudeau) words on regional inequality, spoken at Moncton when hopes were high and before disillusionment set in. He said:

I am convinced that the need to strike at the roots of regional economic disparity in Canada is one of the absolutely top priorities of any Canadian government.

He was enthusiastic then, riding the waves of Trudeau-mania. Perhaps he did see all Canadians on the way to becoming full participants in his "just society". But now, almost seven years later, if he still has that vision he possesses far better eyesight than we poor mortals in the Atlantic provinces.

DREE should get away from the idea that its only responsibility is to provide industrial incentives to entrepreneurs who wish to move into the Atlantic area, or to local businessmen who want to expand their present operations. DREE should be doing far more than that. It should be looking hard at the big jobs here crying to be tackled. For example, what has DREE done about the Fundy tidal power project which is linked with the building of the Chignecto Canal? I would wager nothing. It is very convenient for the government, whenever Fundy is seriously mentioned, to be able to pass it off to a study, or a commission, or a committee, which it knows full well can stall the project another year or another decade. Why is DREE not brought into these discussions? Why is not DREE handed the responsibility of correlating these studies? Why is not DREE given the job to do?

DREE was created to lead the attack on regional disparity. Like Uriah the Hittite, it was to be thrust into the