

Supply—Privy Council

findings of this top-level group should be read and put into practice.

I see nothing in the Deutsch commission findings which suggests it would be helpful to the economy of Canada or to the economy of the Atlantic regions to defer construction of the Prince Edward Island causeway or take any action which would restrain the economic growth of a region which is so painfully lagging behind the national average, as is so clearly documented. This is one project I intend to keep close to my heart and, although I am a man of very few words, perhaps very close to my mouth in the months ahead. I should like to see someone over there read the annual review.

Mr. Howard: We in the New Democratic Party, having endorsed officially the concept of the Economic Council of Canada, are also somewhat dismayed about its brief history, especially from the point of view of government reaction to the various studies and reports which the council has made. It would seem to me that if there were any sincere desire on the part of the government to activate itself in the field of economic planning, or to gear the results of its own activities as far as they affect the economy to the studies and research carried out by the council, it would do something more than simply acquire copies of the various reports for the purpose of hiding them away in some library where they could be consulted by people willing to seek them out.

Instead, the government would follow up these recommendations by a cabinet determination of what should be done to deal with the questions raised by the council and the problems which its research activities have brought to light, ensuring thereby that Canada will progress economically at the most advanced rate possible.

I wish to buttress the concern of the hon. member for Queens by saying that there is not much point in our continuing to vote funds for an eminent group such as the Economic Council of Canada if its members are merely concerning themselves with an exercise in futility, developing ideas and information the fate of which is to be disregarded and unused for value, as far as the Canadian people are concerned.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Allard: Just a word, Mr. Chairman, further to the remarks of the two hon. members who have just spoken precisely about the work of the Economic Council.

[*Mr. Macquarrie.*]

Well, I believe that, in this field as in many others, we in Canada are witness to studies on the part of the government, sponsored and ordered by the central governments, and the provinces, like the province of Quebec, have also undertaken studies that set up an Economic Council.

Now, you see, I remember that in 1958—I do not have the reference here—with regard to the very important problem of Canada's economic development, I suggested setting up a federal-provincial Economic Council, which would have included members appointed by the central government and members appointed by the provincial governments, and experts appointed by both levels of government.

Of course, my suggestion was not picturesque enough to impress the government of the day and the one which followed. In any event, we now have after eight years, Mr. Chairman, a second volume of the Economic Council which the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) refers to as informative work, the suggestions of which are not implemented or which do not give effective and visible results.

We have the government of the province of Quebec which has also set up an Economic Council which is to publish its report soon. Therefore, we have advance assurance that the positions of the two councils with regard to Canada's economic problems are different.

What then is the use of these studies, as some hon. members have pointed out, if research and other working projects are not properly co-ordinated at the different levels of the federal and provincial governments.

That is why I would suggest that the hon. minister consider the possibility of the government better co-ordinating economic research and planning in the country, for the economy is the responsibility of the federal government but the provinces also have a degree of economic responsibility.

Indeed, we know that the different governments, such as that of Mr. Lesage and the recently elected Mr. Johnson intend to assume economic responsibility and even ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp)—as I believe also in the case of British Columbia—that they be consulted before the federal budget is drawn up. All this is fine with regard to co-ordinating the economic development of Canada.

I would ask the hon. minister to study the possibility of changing the Economic Council