

Regional Development Incentives Act

exert the controlling interest. Minority shareholding would certainly be welcome, and it is needed in this country.

• (3:10 p.m.)

Although some of my arguments have been repeated elsewhere, the one I am about to raise has not been. I refer to the very important constitutional question. If this bill is to have the effect that the minister and members of the government wish it to have in removing poverty, it is important for us to avoid a narrow-minded, legalistic and rigid approach to the constitution. The Prime Minister's thinking on the subject has characterized that approach. Anyone examining the Prime Minister's writings on this subject will see that he has adopted the classical eighteenth century view of federalism which is permeated with the idea that there must be rules and regulations governing the strict division of powers. That view ignores the fact that constitutions must reflect social and economic realities. Any constitution with any meaning changes; it changes so that the people living under it may come to grips with their social and economic problems. The minister must persuade other members of the cabinet who may be wedded to the Prime Minister's view to adopt a less rigid approach to the constitution. There must be less rigidly defined lines of responsibility between federal and provincial governments.

The minister must persuade the Prime Minister to yield to his arguments. He must argue for the adoption of a form of co-operative federalism under which the federal government can take initiatives in areas which, strictly speaking, lie within the provincial domain. I do not say we should ignore the constitution. In certain areas, such as those involving schools, roads or hospitals which lie within the provincial domain, the federal government must consult the provinces. I am not advocating arbitrary action; I merely advocate federal leadership. The minister must exercise that leadership throughout the country. The minister touched on the importance of there being federal participation in areas which, strictly speaking, come within provincial jurisdiction.

In this connection may I read from Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence No. 14 of the Standing Committee on Regional Development. At page 286 the hon. member for

[Mr. Broadbent.]

Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) is reported to have said:

Mr. Saltsman: What strikes me as rather significant and important in the program you are bringing forth is that it clearly indicates that the federal government can take the initiative in co-operation with the provinces in any area at all virtually, provided the provinces are willing to have them go along and that the excuse for non-federal intervention or the federal government not seeking the role in some areas is no longer as valid as it might have been before.

The minister's reply was, "Yes". That was a decisive reply because the minister acknowledged that if his department's plans to help the depressed areas of Canada are to have any real meaning, they must cut across constitutional lines. The minister's department will therefore require the co-operation of provincial governments. I see the minister is shaking his head. Does he disagree? I beg your pardon. The minister is not shaking his head. He agrees. I am pleased to see that. It seems to me that the Prime Minister will have to modify the stand he has taken in this house and outside. In any event, I hope the minister wins this argument and that the Prime Minister loses. I say that for this reason: if the minister does not win the argument the poor of this country will be the losers.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Broadbent: That is all I wish to say at this time, Mr. Speaker. My party wishes the minister well and his department well. We consider this bill, by and large, to be good and important. We have made certain suggestions which, if implemented, we think will bring about substantial improvements in this legislation. We shall watch with great care what the minister does and we hope, for the sake of the poor of this country, that he is successful in his endeavours.

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, may I congratulate sincerely the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) for his outstanding contribution in committee and for the sincerity with which he has approached the whole problem of poverty in Canada. Hon. members no doubt will have noticed that the hon. member and I are not in complete agreement on all aspects of this matter.

I have been considering this problem for almost five years. One of the first matters I had to consider on coming to the House of Commons was the question of designated areas. The government of that day introduced this stupid program under which they robbed