

hoped the bill might have been dealt with, the committee is obviously not seized with jurisdiction so no such order can be made.

There is every hope, though, that with the spirit of goodwill which has finally made its way over to the other side of the House, we might get rid of this bill so that the committee would have jurisdiction. Perhaps either now, or before we leave the subject, the House will permit an order to be made enabling the committee to deal with the bill this afternoon.

**Mr. MacEachen:** I believe the suggestion made by the Opposition House leader is a good one, and perhaps it could be agreed that when the order is passed the standing committee can consider the bill as soon as it can conveniently arrange its affairs.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** This is agreed, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it so agreed?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is so ordered.

**Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to continue the remarks I was making on Friday in this debate on Bill C-205 which seeks to offer assistance to industry and provide for further loans similar to those applying to fishermen, farmers and small businessmen, in addition to extending the designated areas so as to include Montreal and southeastern Ontario.

About a year and a half ago, when the Department of Regional Economic Expansion was created, I recall having serious reservations on the subject of the powers accorded by the act to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand), powers which I believe to be excessive. I felt that once a minister had been given such powers he was in a position to convert them into a type of dictatorial exercise; moreover, they might be used for the purpose of extensive political advantage. Nevertheless, I put these misgivings aside, feeling that since we have a cabinet made up of some 30 ministers and a Liberal caucus of some 130 members, any activity of this kind would be curtailed. Perhaps I was wrong. Perhaps I have been naïve.

I have always been aware that a cabinet is in itself a form of dictatorship, since there are 20 or 30 men who make all the important decisions. I have always felt that government is best when there is such a divergence of opinion that no one minister can take advantage of a situation. Looking at the present bill, I have to say that every member from the Atlantic provinces, every member from areas in western Canada where there is regional disparity, takes exception to the proposals contained in it. I am surprised that the ministers from Newfoundland, from Nova Scotia and from Prince Edward Island, together with the ministers from western provinces, have not prevented Bill C-205 from coming before the House. When members like the hon. member for South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau) and the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), as well as the entire opposition, raise an issue in respect of the principle of

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Bill C-205, perhaps they are like voices in the wilderness because it is possibly a *fait accompli*.

● (2:50 p.m.)

I have an article by Gordon Aalborg, which appeared in the *Edmonton Journal*, in which he refers to a quotation from an official of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, Mr. Michael Fitzgerald to the effect that incentives boundaries are extremely flexible. He indicates that it is at the discretion of the department to decide which areas should become designated and which areas should receive special incentives. He indicates also that this act gives little direction to the minister and that most of the decisions are made at his discretion, justified only by the unemployment situation. For example, when the minister designates the Montreal area or parts of southeastern Ontario, he can refer to the fact that at the present moment in Quebec unemployment stands at 7.2 per cent, up from 6.3 per cent in November of 1969. He can also cite, in respect of specific parts of southeastern Ontario, which has a very heavy unemployment rate—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I wonder whether hon. members would mind if I drew to their attention the fact that there are many conversations going on in all areas of the House, and that is unfair to the hon. member who has the floor. It is certainly difficult for the Chair to follow the hon. member. If these conversations have to be carried on in the House, perhaps they could be done *sotto voce*. I think it might be appropriate to carry on the conversations behind the curtains.

**Mr. Lundrigan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am mainly interested in the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion hearing my presentation and I think he is listening. Perhaps other hon. members have made up their minds or have not even read the bill and are not aware of its consequences. The minister is aware of the unemployment situation in Quebec. I wonder whether he is fully aware of the fact that at the present moment, regardless of the historic reason behind it, in the province which I represent there is an unemployment rate of 9.1 per cent, even higher than the critical unemployment rate in any area of any province in Canada. During this winter, this rate will likely soar to about 20 per cent.

At this time the minister is using as a tool to fight the unemployment situation across Canada the special powers of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. In 1968, during the debate, and in 1969 when approval was given by the House, certain principles were agreed to in respect of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. It was to be a tool to be used to fight specific problems in certain parts of Canada, a tool to fight regional disparity. It was never agreed that the department was to be used as an instrument to combat the economic ills across the nation.

If the minister follows the logic of designating highly industrialized parts of Canada, then he has no alternative but to designate the whole province of British Columbia which today has the second highest unemployment rate in Canada. This rate has increased to 8.6 per cent from