

The Address—Mr. Ouellet

Mr. Côté (Langelier): Definitely not, Mr. Speaker. I think my answer to the question is to the opposite effect. I simply want to express a concern, and an interest in the point raised by my colleague, and also, before giving a final answer to the question, to inquire exactly what the situation is and respond accordingly. I have no intention whatsoever of admitting the Hon. Member's claims or allegations on that matter.

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, does that mean that if the Minister is not ready to condemn the partisan politics of the Tory Government in New Brunswick, he approves of what is going on in New Brunswick and colludes with those provincial authorities who make improper use of public funds?

Mr. Côté (Langelier): In no way, Mr. Speaker. My purpose is neither to condemn nor to admit that situation. I have simply shown a concern for looking more closely at the matter and responding accordingly.

I repeat once more, Mr. Speaker, that we have shown in a very practical way, since September 1984, our intention to make a special effort in the area of regional development. That commitment has been renewed in the last Throne Speech, and more specifically, we have been promoting economic renewal in Atlantic Canada.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon me I consider all viewpoints, rather than react too rashly to the situation.

• (1520)

[English]

Mr. Redway: Mr. Speaker, I was most interested in the Hon. Minister's remarks. His responsibility and that of his Department being primarily to address problems of regional disparity, I would like to inquire whether he has some new policy initiatives which he might be taking in this area. I ask him that bearing in mind that we have tried things like tax incentives but recent studies seem to indicate they do not really work. We have tried grants and loans to businesses in different disadvantaged parts of the country but they do not seem to have done the trick either. The Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) suggested that perhaps we should be shifting government Departments to other regions of the country. He suggested that the Farm Credit Corporation might go to one of the smaller communities in his riding. We tried shifting the Department of Veterans Affairs to Charlottetown, and that has some drawbacks, it seems to me.

Mr. McMillan: Careful!

Mr. Redway: I wonder if the Minister might tell us what he has in mind in the way of new initiatives which will perhaps address this problem in a meaningful and effective way.

[Translation]

Mr. Côté (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, I think we are mainly trying to increase the efficiency of our tools and of our programs in the Atlantic region and we have done it quite

openly. Indeed, our approach is especially based on a federal effort which should be better directed and adjusted to the needs of that area.

We think it is essential to bring those activities into line at all levels of government and to obtain a greater support or impetus from the private sector in order to get maximum results and as I said earlier to iron out those regional disparities.

In accordance with our commitment, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to promote the spirit of independence and entrepreneurship of the people in Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Has the Minister completed his remarks? The Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan).

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question from my colleague. According to the report to which he referred, the government of New Brunswick has chosen three ridings now represented by Liberal Members which it believes it could win at the next general election for a special investment of funds coming from the Minister's department. Does he consider that this is the proper way to choose ridings to be granted government funds, thus helping the Conservative Government at the next provincial election?

Mr. Côté (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, I think I will repeat the same arguments which I directed to my colleagues opposite and merely say that we have set up programs to iron out those regional disparities. I do not intend to confirm or deny the allegations made today. I have merely said that I was looking closely at the situation and would promptly respond.

Mr. Kaplan: Indeed, the Minister's answer—

Mr. Speaker: I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member but the time allotted for questions and comments has now expired.

The Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet).

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate you on your election to the Chair and wish you every success and satisfaction in the exercise of your very important duties. I shall also, if I may, congratulate the three Hon. Members who will assist you in your work, and especially your two principal assistants who will continue to perform those duties and tasks they performed so admirably during the first session of this Parliament.

As is customary, I also wish to congratulate the mover and the seconder of the motion for the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne and the seconder of that motion. Now that I have congratulated six Conservative Members, which for me is a great deal, I would like to express an opinion I think is shared by Canadians in general, namely that in this Speech from the Throne, the Progressive Conservative Government has been a great disappointment. After all, when the Government decided to prorogue and delay resumption of