

Adjournment Debate

insurance policy is to apply to, how can it operate? It cannot operate; it is impossible. So we must have the licensing policy in order to put into effect a proper catch insurance program. I think this is what many people would like to see. I think they would like to get away from unemployment insurance but, as a sequel to unemployment insurance and as an improvement on unemployment insurance for fishermen, have a catch insurance program.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I am very sorry but I must interrupt the parliamentary secretary because the time allotted to him has now expired.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION—PROPOSAL TO
ESTABLISH REGIONAL OFFICES—POSITION OF
NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, on April 10, 1973, in the Standing Committee on Regional Development an exchange took place between the minister and myself in respect of decentralization. I should like to remind the House of some of the things the minister said to me at that time. At that time I asked the minister whether the government was decentralizing in Toronto, and he replied that they were not. I asked whether northern Ontario was not ready for decentralization, and the minister replied:

I am sorry, I have not been asked the question about how we are going to decentralize because I am afraid we got sidetracked onto a few other issues. But I will be very glad to say to you that we are not decentralizing to Toronto. That would not be decentralizing at all; it would be recentralizing in another place, and that is not what we intend to do.

● (2210)

Then on July 17, 1973, as recorded at page 5699 of *Hansard*, I asked the minister the following question:

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. In view of the minister's announcement that DREE will be decentralized and four regional offices established, will he inform the House whether northern Ontario is to be the recipient of one of these regional offices?

HON. DONALD C. JAMIESON (MINISTER OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION): Mr. Speaker, it will not only be the recipient of a regional office; there will be other regional offices established in Ontario and there will be a very special office established in northern Ontario.

Then lo and behold, on November 26, 1973, the Regional Economic Expansion Department issued a press release in which the following statements were made:

The new organization plan provides for a major decentralization of the staff and activities of the department and for the establishment of regional headquarters in Moncton, Montreal, Toronto and Saskatoon. It also provides for the strengthening of the departmental offices in provincial capitals, which are to be headed by a senior official at the director general level.

It is fairly obvious that there is a great discrepancy between what the minister says will happen and what actually is taking place. The minister displays a complete insensitivity to the feelings and needs of the people in northern Ontario. What is in effect taking place is the recentralizing of the department's bureaucracy in Toronto, and if anyone knows how the people of northern Ontario feel about that kind of thing, how they view Toronto in the perspective of northern Ontario, they will know that it

[Mr. Rompkey.]

means for them "business as usual" so far as DREE red-tape and the people of northern Ontario are concerned.

I raised this whole matter of what the minister euphemistically calls the decentralizing of DREE in the miscellaneous estimates committee hearing on November 28, 1973. I asked the minister about the cross-purposes of these two regional offices which he announced, one in Toronto and the other at the Lakehead, and the myriad smaller offices in other parts of the province. The minister is never at a loss for words and he was not at a loss on this occasion, because this is what he said:

Well, a continuous monitoring service is built into the decentralization through which on a regular basis—and by regular, I suppose in most instances, it would be daily—advice is provided to a co-ordinating centre here in Ottawa on just what is happening, what offers have been made and so on within the various parts of the country.

The whole operation boggles the mind and sets the stage for even more confusion than before. Gulliver described some of these situations in his travels, and it seems to me that we in northern Ontario will experience that all over again. What the minister should be doing is setting up, in addition to the regional office in Thunder Bay, a regional office in Sudbury to service northeastern Ontario and eastern Ontario. He should be setting up a co-ordinating office in Toronto, not an office of the kind he describes in his press release which is in effect decentralizing the bureaucracy from Ottawa to Toronto.

Let Toronto have the co-ordinating office. Let them fiddle around with the statistical evidence once the approvals have been given and offers taken up in the areas that need them. It seems to me that the minister can un-complicate things and can make them much smoother for the people in areas such as mine in northern Ontario who have applied for incentive grants under the DREE program.

Mr. Charles Turner (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, following the announcement in the Speech from the Throne in January, 1973, that the Department of Regional Economic Expansion would be decentralized, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) made public on July 16 a copy of a memorandum from his deputy minister to the staff of the department which described in detail the objectives, the basic plan, the principal functions and regional variations of the department's new plan of organization. The document stated clearly that the new plan would provide for a genuine decentralization of the department's analytical, implementation and administrative units.

The department's new plan of organization is aimed at providing for improved integration of departmental activity, for a better capacity to administer existing programs and for improved interdepartmental co-ordination. It also provides for more comprehensive analytical work and for co-operation with provincial governments in the identification and pursuit of developmental opportunities.

On August 10 the minister announced the locations of the regional offices of the department, and in the case of Ontario the announcement mentioned that the regional headquarters for the Ontario region would be in Toronto and that there would be an office in Thunder Bay. At the time of that announcement the minister also indicated