

*Government Organization*

One of the dangers in establishing the new Department of Regional Economic Expansion and giving this responsibility to a minister, a danger that must constantly be kept in mind by the government as a whole, is that there may very well be a tendency on the part of other ministers to say, "Let Jean do it" and not accept any particular responsibility for, or even wash their hands of, the whole problem of regional disparity. This is something the minister will have to fight against every day that he holds this portfolio, and it is a matter which I want to emphasize as forcefully as I can.

This bill does not assure anything like the degree of co-ordination which there must be among the departments of the government if regional disparity is to be attacked effectively. Second, it certainly does not assure anything like an adequate degree of co-ordination or co-operation with the provinces. There have certainly been many possibilities in recent years for this government and the provinces to work at cross-purposes. I do not think it would be difficult to produce examples where this has happened in the area of development.

• (3:20 p.m.)

The ADA program, for example, might very well have tended to work in a number of provinces in a direction contrary to that which the provinces involved in regional and industrial development might themselves have wished. Certainly there has not been a full measure of co-operation.

This bill gives the minister and the Governor in Council very wide and, indeed, extraordinary powers, and it is most important that these powers be exercised in co-operation with the provinces and in close consultation with them. There is, for example, no clear indication in the bill as to how the minister and the government will select the regions in which special efforts are to be made. We do not know, for instance, whether or not there is to be one definition common across the country, or to what extent the provinces will be consulted. We are left in doubt whether the concept of regions will be tailored within certain limits to meet special conditions in individual provinces or to integrate with the policies of the provincial governments concerned.

These are matters with which the minister will have to deal specifically when he speaks to the house. There must be co-operation. We do not know how large these regions are likely to be and some explanation would be very

[Mr. Stanfield.]

helpful in enabling us to judge the wisdom of delegating these substantial powers which are capable of being exercised in a quite arbitrary way.

The bill fails to indicate the kind of aid which can be granted to industry. Here again, the government is given very wide powers of discretion. There is a danger in this regard of distrust arising between different regions of the country because it may be felt that the government is adopting different standards in different parts of Canada with regard to aid of this type. It is important that the government define as clearly and as rapidly as possible the measures by which it is intended to provide aid for industry. I think it is clear enough that the minister does not know the answer yet, because something could have been set out in the bill if more precision had been reached. It is important to eliminate distrust. It is important that those connected with the development of industry on a local or regional basis should know as precisely as possible the kind of aid which is to be available.

Industry will not wait around for very long, Mr. Speaker, while the Treasury Board makes up its mind whether or not a particular type of aid will be granted. In the meantime, developments might very well go ahead in other areas where such assistance to establish on a solid foundation is not required. These wide powers could be a source of conflict and misunderstanding in a number of directions. Unless exercised carefully they could lead to constitutional conflicts with the provinces, or to the government of Canada and the governments of the provinces working at cross-purposes in terms of development policy. Co-operation and consultation are therefore imperative, and the success of this new department will really depend upon the way in which it is administered.

These wide powers are important also in relation to the suspicion they may engender in connection with their administration. Of course, if they are exercised in a vague way without definition they may simply result in confusion and ineffectuality in the field of regional development. Again, I say we need as precise a definition as possible as quickly as possible in order to learn how these powers will be translated into orders in council.

The minister has indicated one or two concepts which appear new to him and to the government, ideas which it is intended to use in an attempt to solve the problems caused by regional disparity. He has admitted—and I do