

*Regional Development Incentives Act*

consideration all the different circumstances that exist in Canada.

It is interesting to note that some five years later the government of Canada is prepared to adopt in principle virtually everything that Professor Wilson recommended at that time. I am pleased to see, although it does take time, that governments here can learn. In other words, the views once scorned, and gradually adopted in part, in the first instance related not to the concept of growth but to the concept of unemployment. I think it was unfortunate that the growth centre concept was ignored. The concept of developing centres of self-generating growth, urged by Professor Wilson and others a number of years ago but rejected by the government of Canada, has now been accepted by the minister. This is encouraging.

The same thing applies to the secondary kind of aid that the minister is proposing to give in certain cases. There is a recognition that since a new product is being developed there will be an additional period of difficulty for the factory or plant concerned. The secondary kind of aid is related, in some respects at least, to the amount of employment that is involved. This concept was advanced by Professor Wilson and is one of which anyone involved in promoting industry in a province of slow growth is only too well aware.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the handicap faced by an industry entering an industrially underdeveloped part of Canada in order to establish an industry of any sophistication and which requires training of personnel. It was possible to overcome this to some extent under the old vocational training agreements made between a province and the federal government to train unemployed on the job. This method was available for some time, and it was possible to overcome this kind of difficulty.

However, in the newer vocational training agreements adopted a couple of years ago, this facility was eliminated. It became impossible any longer to provide this kind of training on the job for a period of six months or so. It became virtually impossible under conditions existing in past years for an industry to establish itself in an underdeveloped area, where there was no pool of trained labour to speak of, and satisfactorily commence operations at a plant without suffering almost catastrophic losses during the initial period until the work force was trained, became integrated and was effective

as a unit. In other words, this process received a substantial setback under the new vocational training agreements adopted a couple of years ago. It is of the utmost importance that the minister is now taking measures to provide for this kind of much needed assistance, I would say essential assistance, and I hope that the measures taken by the minister will prove, as I believe they will, to be really helpful in this respect.

Without dwelling too long on the past I must say that, as a result of the failure of the government of Canada over the past four or five years to take advantage of all the good advice given to it, a good deal of time was lost in areas like the Atlantic provinces. Certainly, some effort was wasted and there has been a loss of time in developing centres of strong growth. I am pleased to see that the minister has revised the thinking in this regard, though I am a little discouraged by what seems to me to be the rather leisurely way in which the whole matter has been proceeding to date. I do not want to be unfair to the minister because he may have more difficulties to overcome than are apparent to me on the outside, but it seems to me that one year is quite a long time to take to get to the stage where we are just beginning to put the measure through the house. I find it difficult to understand why it would take one year to get this far. That fact that it has taken a year inevitably makes me question with how much vigour the program is going to be implemented.

There are other areas of concern with regard to this legislation, and the minister mentioned one of concern to him as he closed his remarks, namely the degree of discretion that is vested in the minister under this legislation. The minister emphasized the burden placed upon him. He recognized that inevitably some suspicion might arise in the course of the exercise of this discretion. He pointed to ways and procedures that he proposed to follow in order to reduce any such suspicion, and said he would do as much as he could to convince everyone concerned that he and his staff were being absolutely fair and even-handed.

● (3:00 p.m.)

I wish the minister well in this regard. I hope he is able to convince everybody concerned that there is no favouritism. I know he will try to administer the bill in that way. I suggest that it might be helpful to him, and to the program generally, if he were to consider the establishment of an advisory board