

*Supply—Regional Development*

terms of what it would do to this area of the Atlantic region during its construction period? We have not heard what the government intends to do in this respect.

We have not heard about the government's intention with regard to other programs such as the corridor road, which would greatly alleviate one of the basic problems in the Atlantic area, that of transportation. We would like to know a good deal more about other programs. We heard the minister's announcement in September with regard to the area development agency for Saint John, Halifax-Dartmouth and Fredericton, including them in this program. We are now told these things will happen only when amendments are made to the program some time in the new year. We want to know what will happen to some other programs now in operation. The P.F.R.A. program has done some good things with regard to conservation in the west. We are told that this program will be restructured. We wonder whether it will be expanded in its restructuring in the future. We wonder what is the reassessment in regard to these programs which are now under consideration. So far in this discussion we have been told none of these things, and frankly I think the Canadian people, especially those primarily involved, are greatly disappointed.

I would be interested to know what the minister means when he talks about regional development. This is a kind of loose and amorphous term which we would like defined. It has been used now for some months, perhaps some years, but very little definition has been given to us by the government with regard to what they mean. Does every person who lives in an area in which there is a slightly higher unemployment situation or a lower productivity situation suddenly look around him and say, this is one of the areas going to be tackled seriously in a program of regional development? If you live in the maritimes you might make that assumption. But do you make this assumption if you live in northern Alberta, rural Manitoba, parts of Ontario, or the interior of British Columbia for instance? What are the definitions we are to give to the words "a program of regional development"? To be more specific, what are our priorities and goals in this respect?

• (8:50 p.m.)

Surely to goodness even the setting up of the department would be a rather shallow or hollow task, unless there has been some public

discussion of what our goals are. Are the goals of this new department primarily directed toward reducing chronically high unemployment in certain areas of the country, or are they related to increasing productivity, and if so at what levels? Do they deal in any realistic fashion, in a way that can be measured to determine the success of the program, with the question of income disparity, or do they deal, with the very disturbing problem facing the Atlantic region, one with which A.P.E.C. has been so concerned, namely that of out-migration? We have had no statements or indications, or indeed no opportunity for any discussions, and it disturbs me greatly that what may in fact be happening behind the scene is a subtle reorganization of a series of programs and projects, a kind of patchwork quilt which in the end will mean not much more than what we have known to date, and that is very little.

I wonder also whether in our thinking of the problem of economic disparity we are thinking only in what I would call narrow, limited and perhaps unrealistic ways of exclusively economic questions, or whether we are facing what in fact to me are some of the basic issues with regard to regional disparity, that is the social questions. If we are looking at the social questions and if, as the minister suggests, this is indeed part of the responsibility and concern of this projected new department, then surely to goodness we have already got off on the wrong foot because we know that as a result of constitutional problems, when it comes to a matter of social questions and social issues we must have a considerable amount not only of consultation with various provincial government officials, but of effective co-ordination and co-operation.

Unless I have been badly misinformed, there seems to have been little evidence to date that such is taking place. I am afraid we are going through the traditional federal pattern of failure. A program, a project or a concept is now being evolved within the department or with a group of federal officials, and when we have finally evolved our position we will then agree to enter into some kind of negotiation with the various regional representatives. Whether they be provincial officials, municipal officials or officials of other kinds of voluntary agencies, will not be clear, but what we will in effect be saying is that we know here in Ottawa what all the goals and priorities are in the various regions