

these efforts today are the policies and programs of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. They are of growing importance to all parts of Canada which are lagging, and are of particular continuing interest and importance to the Atlantic region. While equalization and shared-cost programs ensure an equitable allocation of most public services, the policies and programs of DREE are a positive investment in the future. They are the key to the creation of jobs and the resurgence of hope. The people of New Brunswick and those in the other parts of Canada which receive DREE attention know that a conscious and concrete effort is being made to overcome past neglect and to bring them into the mainstream of Canadian economic activity.

The policies and programs have evolved over a considerable period of years. They are still changing, as they must, since there are no easy answers and no simple techniques. Regional disparity is not unique to Canada and solutions are not readily available anywhere.

We must build upon experience, and changes are being introduced to regional development policies which should prove a significant step forward. General development agreements are being entered into with each province except Prince Edward Island, which already has a comprehensive development plan. These new agreements, combined with continued regional industrial incentives, will make it possible for the federal government and the provinces jointly to determine their development priorities and the appropriate means to achieve them.

This new approach calls for the identification of development opportunities, the formulation of a plan of action, the co-ordination of all public policies which can be brought to bear, and implementation which focuses the combined federal-provincial development effort to realize on specific opportunities.

It is a national program which has great flexibility in application. It recognizes that similar problems may have different solutions in the various parts of Canada. It recognizes the coincident responsibility of the two levels of government and could well lead to closer working relationships between them than we have experienced to date. Problems of regional disparity cannot be overcome by jealous governments working at cross purposes, nor with one partner being more than equal to the other. No one government has a monopoly on wisdom.

At this stage, perhaps I may be permitted a personal note. Thinking back over the years when I had the privilege of being a colleague of the then Premier Robarts, I considered at that time that Premier Robarts had the Canadian people in his mind first and foremost, and not necessarily just the people of Ontario. I thought he was a great Canadian, and he proved it on very many occasions. He wanted to share the national wealth, and he did it in a superb way.

The introduction of general development agreements and the subsidiary agreements for specific development effort which will flow from them will require of each party a great deal of patience and conscious effort to work together. This will be a new challenge to those concerned with federal-provincial relations, but one which I feel can be successfully met.

Our Confederation began as a co-operative effort, and it is only by striving to work together to solve mutual problems that our public institutions can dynamically serve. I wish to draw attention to one example of such new co-operative activities. I do so for several reasons: First of all, because I played a role, perhaps, in promoting its consideration; then it demonstrates also that the people of the Maritime provinces are prepared to help themselves; and it has great potential as a development within Confederation.

I am sure all members of this chamber are aware that the Charlottetown Conference of 1864, from which Confederation can be traced, actually began as a conference on Maritime union. The subject was raised again, one hundred years later, in 1964, and resulted in a full-fledged examination supported and financed by the three provincial governments. The outcome of the report, which recommended the serious consideration of intensive joint efforts leading to union, has been the establishment of the Council of Maritime Premiers.

Unlike the occasional interprovincial consultations of the past, the Council of Maritime Premiers has been formally established by an act of each of the three legislatures. Innovative solutions have been devised to enable the Council to take executive action. In three short years the Council of Maritime Premiers has become an effective instrument for the consideration of regional issues, the resolution of regional problems, and the development of a regional position. Tangible progress is being made and difficult issues are not being skirted.

This is clear recognition by the governments and the legislatures of the three provinces that some policies must encompass the region and that the solutions must be devised jointly.

It is not easy to resolve the differences between governments or provinces or the various interests within them. It is not easy to overcome the natural loyalties of Nova Scotians, New Brunswickers, Prince Edward Islanders, Cape Bretoners, Acadians, Haligonians or Saint Johners—you name it, you have it.

Maritime union is not the issue. Effective and productive joint action in the interests of the Maritime provinces is very much the issue. The work of the Council of Maritime Premiers, the joint select committee of the three legislatures, and the various regional policies and agencies being devised and established are important developments within Confederation. They are a recognition of our growing interdependence in a complex world. They are also an example of the efforts being made by the governments of three small provinces to do all within their power to meet the challenge of regional disparity.

● (1450)

I now propose to seize this opportunity for some brief comments on the energy situation in Canada and the policies of the government designed to shelter our economy from rapidly escalating international oil prices and to use our indigenous energy supplies for the benefit of all Canadians.

Honourable senators will remember that on December 6 last year the Prime Minister outlined a new national oil policy for Canada which recognized the creation of a