

provinces will have to pick up the slack. And Mr. Nielsen and his task force have not even had the courtesy to consult with their friends, the provincial Premiers.

What an incredible contradiction, Mr. Speaker! All the western papers are saying that neither the Nielsen task force nor, I presume, the western Ministers, have bothered to sit down with their cohorts in the western provinces to decide on what they can provide joint action. That is on the agenda. It is not the agenda of the Official Opposition; it is the agenda of the western Premiers who are complaining mightily of the lack of consultation. Yet this is the Government which came into office promising that there would be full and open discussion and open sharing of information and responsibility—except with the western Premiers. They seem to have been left out of this grand plan of the economic Ministers. They have not been included in this development. The Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen), just as he has avoided the issues of the native people, women and the regions, is now avoiding the provincial Premiers.

I want to know who the Minister is really talking to. We are fully aware he does not talk to his caucus. I presume he is musing with some past ghosts of ages gone by. I know where the muses are, Mr. Speaker, because the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion has said that his particular idol is C.D. Howe, a former Liberal. That is who the Minister wants to emulate. He has a fat chance of doing that because he got off to a very poor start.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that this Government is a fraud. It is not living up to the kind of spirit of co-operation it talks about. It is not consulting with the provinces. It is going to bring down the Budget next week based upon, I believe, the hidden agenda, which will be to make a number of severe reductions in federal government programs and throw the buck back at the provincial Governments. It is going to assume that the provincial Governments will pick up the slack. The onus will be thrown back on the provinces to carry the economic responsibilities of this country. This is a Government that does not want to take responsibility. It does not want to face up to its obligations.

Let me speak for a moment, Mr. Speaker, about the Economic Regional Development Agreements, the ERDA programs, two major Liberal initiatives which were brought in about a year and a half or two years ago in order to provide for a coherent framework of economic development. I know the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and other Ministers take all the credit for delivering programs under ERDA. They stand up and say, "Look at the wonderful thing we have done in the Provinces of New Brunswick, Quebec and others", based upon a program that we brought in and a Budget that we set aside. The regional development fund that was set aside in the previous Estimates has provided the financial allocation for which this Government is now taking credit. At the same time, it is trying to take credit for the results under that program, it is substantially undermining the spirit of the program. The Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion lost \$200 million on the IRD Program in the November statement.

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Who did that affect? It affected about 80 per cent of the communities in this country which could no longer have tier one funding. The major economic centres in every province across Canada are no longer able to find grants and supports for expansion or new business in their regions. That has been the result of this Minister's responsibility.

● (1120)

Equally, you find in the development of the ERDA program a total and complete lack of action in key areas of the provinces. Western Canada has been waiting for months for some kind of an agreement with the Province of British Columbia. The forestry industry is virtually past its seeding season and nothing has been signed. Negotiations that proceeded and were about to be signed have now been totally forestalled and held up for nine or ten months. It is inexplicable, these kinds of hesitations, lack of action and lack of progress.

Let me point to an example in my province which goes back to the resolution. We had provided as one of the initiatives in the Province of Manitoba the development of the National Research Council Institute of Manufacturing Technology. The reason for providing that was to provide a national centre of research and development in robotics and the newest area of research and technology for small business to move into high technology areas. It was a centre planned to provide opportunities for business, universities and engineers in the private sector to become involved. The building was constructed and the plans were in place.

In the November 8 statement, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) cut off totally all funding for that program. The provincial Government, industrialists, the universities and Members of the Opposition began to raise questions expressing their concern about this matter. The Conservatives rushed together, huddled together and said, "Don't worry, we will look after that". Seven months later, the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Siddon) came to my province and, in one of the great all-time jokes, said, "What I am going to do is set up a committee and have another nine months study of the program". In the meantime, we have lost a number of major businesses that were going to relocate in Winnipeg because of that centre. There is a total discredit of that kind of program. Conservative Members of Parliament are saying that it would have been a closed laboratory. That means they did not read the original prescription.

That is a complete abdication of responsibility for Members of Parliament from Manitoba, not even to have read the original plans, goals and objectives of that centre to know what is going on. They now go around saying something totally different. It is a joke, a travesty, and a transgression that simply points out that this Government has no understanding, care, sensitivity or willingness to try to provide the federal resources in its Crown agency to get involved in plans for economic development.

We have a lack of leadership and direction in the whole transportation agreement with the Province of Manitoba. The