

*Government Organization*

areas of growth potential and others have simply used high levels of unemployment as the criterion of eligibility. I am pleased to see that the government is finally moving away from this outmoded approach. Most of the projects have been completely unconcerned with the social consequences of significant economic change in areas unaccustomed to it. Most have failed to consider the importance of personal involvement in the planning and execution of programs on the part of those who will be affected by them.

Now I should like to say a few words about the new department. The New Democratic Party has recommended for a number of years now that this unco-ordinated effort I have just described to overcome regional economic disparities could be remedied only by creating a department which has this goal as its sole objective. For this reason we welcome the new Department of Regional Economic Expansion.

However, what is also needed is the establishment of a national plan which sets down national objectives and priorities. The government has not established such objectives into which regional growth and development programs could be fitted, with appropriate adjustments made for the allocation of funds. The result of this will be the continuation of programs frequently with conflicting goals carried out by a number of competing agencies. There will be little or no indication of how the system is supposed to work, and how one region is related to another in the national context or what should be the timing of specific steps. The only difference from the past will be that this will now go on within one department instead of many.

The following example will reflect the almost impossible task of a federal minister concerned with regional economic development who is forced to work without objectives and priorities agreed upon by parliament and by cabinet. The minister has to be the spokesman in cabinet and in parliament for all the lagging regions of Canada, not only on a provincial basis but also on an area basis. His views and judgment, and the advice of his officials, bear on most of the economic policies pursued by the Canadian government. This is because many government decisions have significant regional or area implications, whether it is a decision to pay subsidies to farmers or fishermen, to assist the C.N.R. to build a railway spur to open up a northern mining area, to offer financial assistance for a power grid for the

maritime provinces, or to approve an urban renewal project in Quebec city.

The prime responsibility to deal with such matters, however, rests with the appropriate department or government agency responsible for finance, agriculture, fisheries, northern development, mining, or housing, all of which report to their respective ministers. The officials of these departments and agencies would not look too kindly on officers of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion telling them what they should or should not be doing, nor would the ministers of these departments be too happy to be told by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion what their policy should be in areas of their responsibility.

It is true that some of the difficulties and irritations may be reduced through consultation both at the ministerial and departmental levels through those traditional delaying techniques of referring controversial issues to committees. But in the end somebody has to make a decision, and if the decision is made by the minister responsible the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion may disagree, and vice-versa.

When such difficulties arise they are usually resolved by a dictum of the Prime Minister or as a result of an understanding reached by the cabinet as a whole. But government decisions affecting regional economic development are so numerous and the possibility of conflict on specific programs or policies between the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and his colleagues is so great that the cabinet or even a cabinet committee would be heavily burdened with the task of acting as an arbiter rather than going on with the job of formulating policies, leaving their implementation up to the ministers responsible.

I should like to give a practical example of what in theory appears to me to be a difficulty. Canada Manpower of the Department of Manpower and Immigration has recently arranged for several thousand maritimers, unemployed coal miners and their families in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, to migrate to Alberta and eastern British Columbia over the next four years. In these two areas there is a labour shortage in the coal mining industry and a need to meet the growing Japanese demand for Canadian coal. Financial assistance is being made available to these recruited miners through the manpower mobility program which is designed to pay moving costs of unemployed workers who cannot find jobs in their own areas but who, because of

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