

*Government Organization Act, 1983*

like to confine my remarks to a discussion of matters tied to the former Department of Regional Economic Expansion because of its special concern to me.

DREE is, of course, dead. It was knocked off in January of last year and the Government has been stomping on the grave ever since without, as has been pointed out, the benefit of any legal authority. Any attempt now to exhume the corpse of DREE would be as messy as the execution.

Members on this side would like an assurance that a serious commitment to regional development will continue to exist. Unfortunately, the evidence does not provide much hope in this regard despite the lip service paid to the subject by the Government benches.

We have been told by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the Minister of State for Economic Development (Mr. Johnston) and other Cabinet Ministers that the disappearance of DREE marks a change in federal Government priorities and that it will mean a greater emphasis on development in the have-not regions of Canada.

The Prime Minister for example, told a press conference in January, 1982 that the Government reorganization "will provide a Government-wide focus on regional economic development". He went on to say, "It was no longer acceptable that a single Department be responsible for regional development", adding that all Departments would have to concern themselves with regional development in the new Government-wide approach.

That sounded very desirable. In other words, the Prime Minister was saying that regional development had become just too important to have its own Department, kind of a bizarre statement, I would suggest.

It became so important that it did not need a Department to oversee and co-ordinate the regional incentives of the Government. Although this point of view was later discredited by the Senate report on Government Policy and Regional Development, Cabinet Ministers, to the embarrassment of this Government, continue to mouth the Prime Minister's nonsensical words, that somehow you can improve the delivery of an important service by dismantling the co-ordinating function. The most recent example of this was the Government House Leader who said in the House of Commons on May 27, and I quote:

Regional economic development had reached a level of maturity which made it necessary to integrate its objectives in the activities of all Departments with an economic input.

That is strange thinking indeed. The word "integrate" means to draw together, to co-ordinate, and yet we see that disbanding of the co-ordinating agency. It makes no sense at all. One can only assume that the Department of Finance, the Department of National Revenue, the Department of Transport and others have not yet reached this so-called level of maturity or they would have been integrated along with other Departments in the regional development scheme. Obviously this line of reasoning is little more than claptrap.

Certainly there is a need to co-ordinate the work of DREE with other Government bodies, but it is testimony to this Government's inability to co-ordinate the activities of its various Departments that when it recognizes such a need, its solution is to take the co-ordinating agency away, to be absorbed by other Departments. That is reverse logic. What we have here is the same old wolf in sheep's clothing. In the process or reorganization, it is the people of Canada who are going to be fleeced.

This was the case with External Affairs and Trade, Regional Development and Industry, and recently the same merger solution was applied to Science and Technology and the new Department of Regional Industrial Expansion. Whenever this Government confronts a problem, rather than streamline and inject efficiency and common sense into the solution-finding mechanism, it creates more problems by creating more agencies and dismantles rather than improves the agencies presently available.

I mentioned earlier that we have other horses to worry about getting away from us. It appears that the Science and Technology horse slipped out of the stable this summer while Members were absent from this place. The Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Johnston) announced in July that he was increasing the importance of his Ministry by reducing its staff by one-third, from 170 to 120, and shipping his former employees off to another Department. That is convoluted logic. The importance of the role of the Minister and his Department are increased by cutting the size of the staff and in the same process not providing improved guidelines and criteria by which the important service is to be delivered. It seems totally illogical.

I read this morning that the new science adviser to the Minister of State for Science and Technology is having a terrible time bringing in people from the private sector to assist him in evolving, managing and administering a comprehensive policy for Canada. That is small wonder when that Minister had to lay off 50 of his employees, shrinking his Department by one-third. What competent and able senior scientific administrators in this country would come to work for a Minister whose Department was faced with that type of scenario? I suppose if the Minister really wants to make science and technology important by this logic, he will reduce his departmental staff by zero. That is exactly how the DREE Program was treated.

Forgive me if I become concerned when the Party that campaigned on low energy prices for Canadians in 1980 now promises to put a higher priority on regional development, and science and technology for that matter, by killing the Department concerned. They lack credibility. What happened in 1980 and what happened with wage and price controls in 1975 will happen again here. We will be promised one thing and get the opposite. It is something like the story the Prime Minister told many years ago. You may not see who was in the wheelhouse and the horizon may be shifting to the extent that you thought you were heading for a new and brighter era, but you would