

*Adjournment Debate*

creeping red fescue is a rare, high grade grass seed for which Alberta is widely known. We produce much of it.

I appreciate the Minister's efforts in downsizing his Department in accordance with the Government's initiatives toward a deficit reduction. He has done a wonderful job in a portfolio that I do not for a minute think is an easy one. In this instance, though, I think he may have received some ill-begotten advice from officials believing that the end justifies the means and damn the practicality.

Edmonton is fortunate to serve as Alberta's capital city and appropriately so, since 60 per cent of the province's population lies within a 100 kilometre radius of Edmonton. Over 1,000 local growers avail themselves of the service offered by these facilities. I submit, then, that the laboratory facilities should be expanded rather than closed or moved.

To this point I have spoken only of the excellent facilities, and not of the people who run them. In short, they are a knowledgeable and efficient group who offer outstanding service to domestic and international growers. Twelve people will lose their jobs, or they will be transferred. Like the facilities, these people too are assets not easily replaced. I would think that the social costs of maintaining them far outweigh the cost of keeping them on the job, in Edmonton.

If I might quote Ms. Alycia Grayson, who, on September 24, wrote to the Minister:

As a clerk who works closely with both the germination and purity laboratories, I am speaking on behalf of those analysts who stand to lose their jobs. We can see no valid reason for closing this lab. (Various reports . . . indicate that some federal employees are close to retirement age; but that is not true in this case. Most of the older staff have at least eight years to work before they can collect their pensions. Where can an analyst find a job if all he/she is trained to do is analyse seed?

I am concerned, too, of a growing perception in my riding and in the West generally that the Government has one rule for the West and yet another for central Canada. I say that this is a growing perception. The fact is much different. We have three Ministers from Alberta who wield great influence in Government. Yet they are also fair to all regions. This is not a truth, it is a perception, but only a perception.

● (1820)

The West has never been so well represented as it is at this time. However, I want to give a case in point about this perception. About three years ago this Government phased out another federal research facility when it closed the environment laboratory. I remember objecting strenuously that such a move would imperil the quality of Alberta's land, air and water, and it was not only Alberta, it was all of western Canada and the Northwest Territories as well. This previous laboratory did the laboratory work for all of the western provinces and the Northwest Territories.

Centralization reeks of redundancy and if you will allow me, Madam Speaker, I will say socialism. To close a laboratory in Edmonton only to increase the facilities in Calgary and

Lethbridge seems illogical to me. In closing, I would ask the Hon. Minister to reconsider his position with respect to the closing of the laboratory and consider the plight of the workers affected before making any further moves involving federal government employees in Edmonton.

**Mr. Lee Clark (Brandon—Souris):** Madam Speaker, first, I would like to say that it is a pleasure and honour to be here in my capacity to speak on behalf of the Minister this evening. I would also like to commend the Hon. Member for Edmonton East (Mr. Lesick) for his diligence in continuing to represent the best interests of his constituents, as he has done since his election to this House some three years ago. I would also like to commend him for his sensitivity to the well-being of those who would be affected by the proposed move.

As the Hon. Member knows, however, when this Government came to office some three years ago, it inherited a rather immense and, in some ways, cruel legacy. That, of course, was the legacy of a national debt which was somewhere in the vicinity of \$200 billion. The present Government must spend nearly \$29 billion each year on interest alone on that national debt. Because of that, the Government does not have the flexibility it would wish to have in dealing with many of the problems which exist in all of our communities.

The Government, of course, has made a commitment to reduce the size of the civil service throughout the nation in order to reduce the costs which all of us as taxpayers must bear. Unfortunately, when that happens, it means that individuals and constituencies are inevitably going to be affected. So it is exceedingly important that we hear from Hon. Members such as the Hon. Member for Edmonton East because they play a role in ensuring that the Government acts with over-all consideration, first, for the well-being of the individuals and, second, for the services which are provided.

I want to ensure that the Hon. Member, and those whom he represents, understands that the reorganization which is proposed in this instance is designed to save those necessary tax dollars and to increase the efficiency which I think all of us are committed to as individuals. The service which has been ably provided by those represented in the laboratory in the Hon. Member's riding will now be provided by those who reside in Saskatoon, not in eastern Canada. I think there has been a misconception about that fact. As the Hon. Member knows, but perhaps some of his constituents do not, there is a comparable lab in Montreal which is also being phased out. That service will be provided in future by a facility in Toronto.

I know the Hon. Member will be pleased to be able to convey to his constituents that the plan is a five-year plan, and we hope that because it is a five-year plan there will be adequate time for change and for the kind of adjustments which are necessary.

I know the Hon. Member would also want to convey to his constituents the assurance of the Government that those