

ting up the department gave the minister greater power than any other minister of the government. We were delighted when the minister was given this authority because, as the hon. member for South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau) indicated, we hoped that departments of government such as the Department of Public Works, the Department of Fisheries, the Department of Manpower and Immigration and others would work together in a co-ordinated effort to attack regional disparity as a government operation and not simply as a departmental operation.

I can do no better than reinforce the remarks of the hon. member for South Western Nova who today forcibly brought to the attention of the House of Commons exactly the position I wish to take. In that respect I suppose some hon. members across the way would ask me why I do not put an exclamation mark against his remarks and then resume my seat. I should do that, because I sincerely endorse his observations about regional disparity as it exists in the Atlantic region and the way he would like to see the minister and the government respond to our needs, rather than simply through the theoretical formulations of a number of experts who with good intentions have designed some of the programs for various parts of Canada.

What have we done in the last year in respect of regional economic development in Canada? As I see it, we have done two things. We have instituted a system of incentives which basically, on principle, is a very good move. Certainly it is. No one criticizes that system, because we need incentives to industry. As a matter of fact, it should be the aim of every member and of the government to provide incentives to industrial regional development in Canada as a whole and to specific parts of Canada in particular. Secondly, we have had a number of development programs such as those in Prince Edward Island and in our province which are aimed at providing an infrastructure, which is now the "in" word in regard to economic development, to encourage economic expansion in particular regions of Canada. I understand several parts of my province have been designated as special areas for receiving grants and loans to help provide an infrastructure for basic services in order to encourage the establishment of industry.

On principle, these moves are indisputably good so far as the benefits are concerned. But what have we lost since the Department of Regional Economic Expansion came into existence? We gave up the Atlantic Development Board, which was never a really well co-ordinated effort but it did provide a kind of on-the-spot response to industrial requests from the Atlantic region. It provided an on-the-spot response in a spasmodic and spurious manner. Perhaps it was not well co-ordinated, but it did provide many studies which I believe form the basis of some of the response by the department to the Atlantic region.

We gave up the ARDA program. In March, 1970, our province came under the agreements in the ARDA program. This program was brought into being by the former Prime Minister to give stimulus to rural Canada. This program might have been designed originally to

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help solve the rural, agricultural problems of western Canada but it became a very fundamental program for our part of Canada. We had the coming into existence of a new department and the bringing to the fore of a couple of programs on the positive side. But on the negative side we lost the old programs which in some ways were not well co-ordinated but were on the spot.

Now we are asked to support Bill C-205, which asks us to establish a loans program which is already in existence under the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act, the Farm Improvement Loans Act and the Small Businesses Loans Act. Really, we are being asked to extend the jurisdiction of these loans to tertiary and service industries and the like in various parts of Canada. In my opinion, the minister has carefully avoided making reference to these loans. This bill could have been brought in as a fourth government loans act. I have checked with knowledgeable members, who indicate to me that this special loans program is really only an extension of previous loan programs which are not now functioning and which are a complete waste of time and energy. I will prove that before I finish speaking.

Second, we are asked to spread the industrial incentives program to Montreal, southeastern Ontario and other special areas. Basically, this is what we are asked to do. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), who very responsibly outlined our position in the House of Commons, and the hon. member for South Western Nova who again today reinforced some aspects of our position, have shown that what we are asked to do is dilute regional disparity to such an extent that the government is asking this department to assume the role of offering a cure-all, a panacea for all the economic ills of the nation.

Some people might say I am criticizing our including southeastern Ontario and Montreal as designated areas. This is not the problem. I could suggest that we even go into British Columbia in respect of special programs for areas where there is a problem of high unemployment. When I continue the debate on Monday I will show that what we are now doing is giving up the fight against regional disparity. I shall also discuss what we are losing by supporting this bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It being four o'clock p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, namely, public bills.

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Mr. McCutcheon: Mr. Speaker, in view of the excellent progress made today, I wonder whether someone on the government side would advise the House what our menu will be on Monday. Perhaps I might direct the question to the government whip.

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that we will continue with the item which is presently before the House and that, hopefully, we will be able to conclude this debate and send the bill to the committee. Then we would proceed with the government reorganization measure.