

*National Economic Development Board*

Yesterday, I was surprised to hear the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) claim part of the credit for this resolution which is being brought down by this government, alleging that he himself had suggested the establishment of such a board in 1960.

I was so much the more surprised that I was aware of the reputation of the member for Essex East before I came to this house, and I wondered how it was that he had not thought of such a resolution before 1960. We must remember that in the 22 years previous to 1957, under the Liberal government, no such resolution was ever submitted—

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** The Liberal government was a government of action.

**Mr. Cook:**—to the house. Would it be that these hon. members only have good ideas when they sit in opposition, or is it simply because of the little attention they give to the problems which exist in the country?

**An hon. Member:** Both.

**Mr. Cook:** Mr. Chairman, the principle of the resolution is very good, even excellent. However, in order that this board can really operate in the interest of the country it will be necessary, that the hon. members study very carefully the four following points:

1. This board should not have to supervise boards which already supervise other boards.

In the last several years, a great many boards were set up but, in many cases, their usefulness fell far short of our expectations. This board will have to examine all the possibilities so that, one day, we may have true economic development in our country, as the Canadian people wish.

2. The government will have to take into consideration any recommendation or suggestion made by the board. In past years, several boards have made recommendations and suggestions to the government, under both the Liberals and the Conservatives, but the government paid no heed in most cases. That is probably why we have so many problems on our hands nowadays.

3. In my opinion, the board should report regularly to the house. In addition, members must have the opportunity of asking questions to the government concerning the administration of the board and the work it does. The government should not reply to hon. members the way it does when they ask questions concerning the C.N.R., the

[Mr. Cook.]

C.B.C. or any other government agency. When we dare ask questions about such agencies, it is impossible to get an intelligent answer, one which would be informative for the people.

4. Mr. Chairman, that board should not be established merely for the purpose of offering another place of retirement for defeated candidates, or to reward some deserving party activities.

The required qualifications to become a member of that board should be anything but of a political nature. All its members should really possess the qualifications required of them in order that, for once, we may have a board really established for the purpose of helping the Canadian people.

Mr. Chairman, when we have succeeded in having those four points accepted by the government, then, and only then, shall we be able to say that we have a board established for the exclusive purpose of coming to the assistance of all areas of our industry. I should like to point out here, Mr. Chairman, that this board is called "national economic development board" and not "national economic planning board". There is quite a difference.

We have seen planning in Russia, in Cuba, and we know where it has led the people of those countries. We have seen some measure of planning in Saskatchewan and today we note that the number of inhabitants in that province is diminishing day by day.

I am not totally against planning, and some points raised by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam were quite right. But we must be careful about the kind of planning which will be done by that board, in order that the Canadian individual may have all the freedom he wants and that private enterprise may have all the latitude and initiative it needs, as it must be in Canada.

(Text):

**The Chairman:** Shall the resolution carry?

**Some hon. Members:** Carried.

**The Chairman:** Shall I report the resolution?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** Hasn't the government got any business? Surely the government has some legislation to present now.

**Mr. Churchill:** Yes, that is quite true.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** Particularly in view of what the Prime Minister said yesterday. It would be embarrassing if the government did not.

**Mr. Churchill:** There are 31 items here. I wonder which one you would prefer.