

Government Organization

I noticed that during the debate on several occasions the minister repeated that it was of the utmost importance that there be close cooperation between the federal government and the province or provinces concerned in the preparation of such programs as might meet their needs, instead of always imposing plans or rataplans upon them. As for us, that is what we fear.

For instance, we recently had an example when a federal park was created in the Gaspé area. Quite a few things are going on which lead us to believe that conflicts of jurisdiction will crop up between the provinces and federal government. What results shall we get if the programs cannot be implemented. Indeed, if the provinces cannot participate in the drawing of those programs, millions of dollars will have been spent which will bring nothing in return to the Canadian people.

It might therefore be most advisable to add a provision to the act ensuring that before planning, before drumming up our plans the provinces will be consulted and everything will be done hand in hand, jointly, by the two levels of government.

● (8:50 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask a few questions on this clause before it passes. In doing so, however, I should like to re-echo the sentiments of my leader and, in fact, lament the passing of the Atlantic Development Board. In my view, the board did an excellent job in the development of the Atlantic provinces. I know there are a number of very important projects indeed in the Atlantic provinces which probably would not have materialized today had it not been for the good work of the Atlantic Development Board. I can think of a number of very important projects which were undertaken because of the initiative of the board in my own province of Newfoundland.

I am particularly concerned about some of the urgent matters the board had under consideration, because experience has proven that when these councils are set up under legislative authority there seems to be quite a period of time when the new department is getting established. I am wondering what will become of the really urgent problems in which the Atlantic Development Board was heavily involved and with which it was trying to cope. I think now particularly of a very pressing situation in my own constituency with regard to the former mining town of

Bell Island. I know this matter has been dealt with rather thoroughly in the committee and that questions were put to the minister the other day in the course of the introduction of his estimates. The committee on regional development as well heard a delegation from Bell Island which was here to plead with the government for some immediate action to solve the problems that existed on this island and in this community as a result of the rather abrupt phasing out in 1966 of the iron ore mines on the island. These mines were operated for a number of years by Dosco and prior to that by the predecessors of Dosco for a period in excess of 65 to 70 years.

The problem is an urgent one in that today in this community there are almost 7,000 people without employment opportunities. I regret to say that the majority of them depend on relief measures of one kind or another. Of course, the consequences of continued relief to the people in this community are morally crippling. Very often this means there will be a serious problem involved in rehabilitating the people and getting them to be self-sufficient again. The Atlantic Development Board was very heavily involved in this matter. In consultation with the government of Newfoundland, the board devised a plan whereby people would be encouraged to leave because the government would pay for the homes of those people who were prepared to leave. Each resident was entitled to sell his home for \$1500. The idea of course was to get the working force to leave the island.

The Atlantic Development Board and its well-qualified general director, Dr. Weeks, who I am pleased to see has an important role in the new department, would be the first to admit this plan did not succeed. The objective was to get the working force to move elsewhere. Today there are almost 7,000 people living there. My worry is, during the interim period while this new department is undergoing its growing pains, while the Atlantic Development Board is going out of existence and while the government is considering new appointments to the Atlantic Development Council, what will become of the urgent situation which exists on Bell Island. I hope the minister will be able to assure the house that these matters will not be swept under the administrative table and will be given the urgent consideration they deserve. I hope also he will assure us that the department, in the interim period, will continue to treat these urgent matters with the same