

Government Organization Act, 1983

As you may or may not be aware, Mr. Speaker, that the community of Brandon, a city of some 40,000 people, has been placed in the same category or tier, tier one, as the cities of Edmonton, Calgary and Toronto. That means that those people who are interested in investing in our community and people such as elected municipal officials and those responsible for the development of industry within our community are now at a tremendous disadvantage. In the past, they had the opportunity to encourage industries to come to smaller western communities because they could apply for DREE grants and, hopefully, receive them. Any industry coming into our community now is no more eligible to receive assistance than those that exist in larger urban communities. As a result, because of the natural disadvantages which exist, we are not likely to receive the new kind of industry which we are seeking.

It is ludicrous to think, Mr. Speaker, that a community such as Brandon situated in western Canada, a community of only 40,000 people, has the same opportunity to attract new industries as cities with a million people or more.

What is wrong with this program, Mr. Speaker? What is basically wrong with it is that the criterion which has been employed for the establishment of tier one, tier two, tier three and tier four has been too narrowly defined. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the principal criterion that is applied is unemployment statistics. I come from a community which is essentially a small urban market centre serving a fairly large rural area. One of the developments which occurs in such a centre is that out of necessity, and tragically so, we lose many of our young people to larger urban communities. In fact, it has been said that we have had to export our unemployed. The statistics, therefore, are grossly misleading. While we do have unemployment statistics showing less than the national average, what those statistics do not indicate is the number of people who have left to go to eastern Canada, to Provinces such as Alberta and British Columbia.

In addition, another criterion employed in the establishment of tier one, tier two, tier three and tier four is the level of income. I therefore find it very difficult to understand how our community, which Statistics Canada recently indicated was ninety-ninth on a list of 100 in terms of per capita income, could possibly find itself placed therefore in the tier one category.

We need a reclassification if this Bill is to achieve the objective which it purports to achieve. We need a reclassification that takes natural, regional and geographic disadvantages into consideration. Some consideration must be given to the distance factor and to the freight costs which our manufacturers must take into consideration. Some consideration must also be given to the amount of local capital which is available. Unfortunately, under the provisions of tier one, new industries coming to Brandon my community are not eligible to receive financial assistance. Even in the case of expansion, the project must be worth a quarter of a million dollars in order to qualify.

During the course of the campaign for the recent by-election, I visited many small businessmen. I was impressed by their enthusiasm and I was impressed by their spirit of innova-

tion. What distresses me, Mr. Speaker, is that this legislation does nothing to encourage the small businessman. It does nothing to encourage anyone who wishes to expand but has a project that is valued at less than a quarter of a million dollars. Unfortunately, it does absolutely nothing to encourage any investor or any businessman to establish a new venture in the Brandon census district. It therefore seems to me that those who have drafted this legislation have failed to take the natural disadvantages which exist into consideration, and furthermore, they have failed to take the size of communities into consideration and they have failed to bear in mind that unemployment statistics can be very misleading. Therefore it is important that this Bill be redrafted and, if not, it is important that this Bill be defeated.

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak for a short time about this particular Bill concerning regional development and the consolidation of various Government Departments that deal with regional development. A few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, you heard me direct a question to a Conservative Member as to what the Conservative policy was. I asked him about his Party's policy in this area, not about his own particular opinion. Trying to get an answer on policy from the Conservative Party in Canada is like trying to nail down jelly. As my friends wake up, I say to them that at some point they will have to tell the Canadian people what they stand for.

Miss MacDonald: We did in Mission-Port Moody.

Mr. Waddell: They certainly did not in Central Nova where the Party leader was unable to set down exactly what the Conservative Party policy was when dealing with the Department of Regional Economic Expansion.

I know that things look rosy for Conservative Members today, but at some point—

Mr. Epp: Were you in Mission-Port Moody?

Mr. Waddell: I was in Mission-Port Moody. The people wanted to get rid of the Liberal Government. But at some point the people are going to ask what we are going to put in its place; another dilettante, perhaps, or a Party with no particular policy? We will wait and see—

Miss MacDonald: What about Vancouver-Kingsway?

Mr. Waddell: We will wait and see what Conservative Members have to offer. So far, they have been unable to enunciate policy. So far, they have been favouring some policies that I think are detrimental to Canadian people, specifically the so-called cruel and harsh restraint policies of Premier Bill Bennett in British Columbia which they have supported under the table. Those things will be debated in the future, but let me say something about this particular Bill. Let me speak about the problem with this particular Bill as I see it. My real concern is with the second part of this Bill, the consolidation of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the DREE Department or the Regional Economic Expansion