

the most promising new manufacturing opportunities are related to technological changes in its own major primary industries.

There is no reason the Atlantic region should not be internationally competitive in the manufacture of fisheries hardware and marine equipment or a leading innovator in the use of marine resources. There are regions in the world with far less capacity for growth which nevertheless exceed our own accomplishments; the difference is that the development of their potential is a political priority.

Where in this legislation is the impetus for more policy specialization in unique regional circumstances? Nowhere, I fear. In its mad march to win political points and have the federal Government do its own compact piece of work so that all can look at it in wonder, the federal Government has made one basic mistake. Its industrial development program relies almost entirely on resources within provincial jurisdiction. The consultative process is mandatory and important. It is not taking place.

● (1240)

Let me say a word about the federal Government's quest for more credit and visibility in the regional development projects it supports. Within reason this is legitimate but I fear it has become almost an indecent obsession. Clearly, this is a primary motive for the disengagement from general development and subsidiary agreements, even those that have proven their effectiveness. The Senate committee, its Liberal majority included, has concluded that there are very few circumstances where it is best for the federal Government to fly alone, but fly alone is now its primary policy.

What is the source of this obsession? Have the Leaders of the Government developed such a siege mentality in their war with Quebec separatists that they think Canadians will be loyal to the national state only if they are beholden to the federal Government? Is every provincial Government that steals a little more credit than it should working for the break-up of Canada? The Bill will give the Minister of State for Economic Development (Mr. Johnston), as the nominal ringmaster of the circus called the Cabinet Economic Development Committee and keeper of the mysterious Regional Development Fund, the legislative power to create a bureaucrat's dream. The federal Government will be able to reset provincial priorities through the powers of the purse and get all the credit for the moneys spent in the region to boot. It will also bear the responsibility and reap the whirlwind.

It may well be that political will rather than the structure of the Government will determine the success of regional development policies, but it does not appear to me as if the proposed changes can accommodate priorities like the following for the Atlantic region.

First, in concert with the provincial Governments, a new emphasis on managerial and manpower training and research and development geared specifically to viable small industries to enable them to compete in national and international markets.

Government Organization Act, 1983

Second, financial incentives for such viable enterprises wherever they can be best located within the region. In other words, treat the region as a region and the provincial communities as communities.

Third, immediate reform of Government purchasing practices, not to favour the inefficient, but to counteract systematic discrimination against smaller and more distant firms.

Fourth, immediate action to identify and seize ocean and marine related manufacturing opportunities where the Atlantic region can become internationally competitive.

I believe this Bill should be amended to define "Underdeveloped region" in terms of its provincial context, to specifically require the Minister to co-ordinate and report to Parliament on the attention being focused by all Government departments on regional underdevelopment and to restore the Government's obligation and mandate to enter into general development and subsidiary agreements with the Provinces.

Hard times have brought us to the end of an illusion that dependency is a satisfactory answer to regional disparity. Not only is it futile, it is defeatist. It assumes that Canada's least affluent region, the Atlantic Provinces, has no real future, that it lacks the resources and the opportunity to establish greater self-sufficiency.

The fact is that modern communications and other technology development provide the opportunity to overcome the large locational disadvantage from which the Atlantic region has suffered for much of the last century. If the Government of Canada does not act now it will be because of the political weakness of the region, a simple but tragic numbers game. Such an attitude would make a mockery of the Government's claim to be committed to national unity and to regional development. I would like to think its intentions are higher, but I do not see it in Bill C-152.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there Hon. Members who are seeking to ask questions? The Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy).

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I should like to agree with a few of the remarks of the previous speaker. Coming from northern Manitoba, one of the underdeveloped regions of Canada, I agree that the death of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion is bad news for people in the underdeveloped areas. I also agree with the Hon. Member's remarks regarding the decision of the Liberal Government not to renew the general development agreements and the subsidiary agreements. One of those was the Northern Development Agreement in northern Manitoba. We were lucky to beat the Liberal deadline and have a new agreement in place worth \$186 million to the region over the next five years. The death of that type of agreement is bad news for every part of Canada where there is an underdeveloped region.

The critic for the Conservative Party, who spoke earlier did not speak about regional development and did not talk about special programs for the underdeveloped areas. I should like to ask the Member who just spoke what the Tory position is. Is