

People ask me what I think of the minister's department. Quite frankly, I do not have too many criticisms, other than the one I have just made. However, I believe it is a valid criticism. I tell people that the department provides a good deal of money to the manufacturing industries, but that really I cannot see any real progress being made. This is the complaint I have. The department does provide a good deal of money and does help industries in the sense that it provides loans and so on, but it really has not done its job in respect of some particular regions of Canada. I can speak for the Atlantic region because it is my area. The department really does not do much to help this area. It is my understanding that one objective of the department is to help this particular area.

[Translation]

I take this opportunity to congratulate the minister. He has created jobs, he has helped industry. But the fact remains that his department is much more concerned with lending money to industry than with trying to solve the problems of the various areas of Canada.

[English]

I am very pleased to see the clause relating to small businesses, because one complaint has been that small businesses have not been able to borrow money in the amounts they require. While they might have a legitimate reason to borrow, they have not been in a position to obtain, for example, \$2,000 or perhaps \$5,000. Small businesses sometimes need to be able to obtain a few thousand dollars. Under the present industrial incentives Act, the minimum amount which an older business may borrow for remodelling purposes is \$30,000. I do not know, but as I read the minister's statement it would appear that the new act will be of some assistance to the tourist industry. I cite the remarks of the minister as recorded at page 1926 of *Hansard* for December 10:

We will now be required by the act to define the areas where the establishment or large commercial concerns can contribute considerably to the economic expansion of slow growth areas. For instance, this could mean administration buildings, stores, convention centres and hotels.

I take that to mean that the department is now willing to provide grants and loans to the tourist industry. I compliment the department and the minister upon that decision because the Atlantic provinces particularly—Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and New Brunswick—can really do something in the field of tourism. Therefore, it is important for the department to take into consideration the fact that this is an industry which requires assistance. Assistance in this form would provide employment and help the areas concerned. It is interesting to note that when the present act came into operation a year and a half ago, one of the things we suggested was that tourism was an industry and, therefore, should be helped in the same manner as the manufacturing industry is helped.

The complaint I have about the department is that it does not have a regional policy but appears to have a national development policy. As was pointed out by the

Regional Development Incentives Act

hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) and others in our party, it is my view that the department should really be concerned about assessing the needs of the various regions. Then, it would be in a position to provide loans and grants to particular regions. In this way, those regions would benefit and become viable.

Mr. McGrath: Give us back the Atlantic Development Board.

Mr. Comeau: I will talk about the Atlantic Development Board in a minute. It was a very good thing. The department, so far as I am concerned, is no longer the guardian of the designated areas or of the so-called have-not provinces. It has now become a department which is taking over the job of the finance department by trying to provide a reasonable standard of living in all parts of Canada. The Department of Regional Economic Expansion, as I said in French a while ago, has no control over the spending of other departments. For example, it has no control over what the Department of Finance does. The Department of Finance has created, through its policies, the present economic climate in Canada. It is through the policies of the government that we have this high rate of unemployment at present. Therefore, if there is unemployment in certain areas of the country, the Department of Regional Economic Expansion should bring this to the attention of the Department of Finance and suggest to the latter that certain policies be avoided in the areas which the Department of Regional Economic Expansion is trying to help.

• (2:40 p.m.)

Again, I want to refer to the Atlantic provinces. I suggest that the Department of Regional Economic Expansion should consider the fishing industry there, and should not merely rely on the Department of Fisheries and Forestry to establish the correct policy for that industry but should advise this department as well as the Department of Public Works on the proper programs to develop that industry. If, for example, the Department of Fisheries and Forestry and the Department of Public Works are not providing the necessary facilities or do not have the right type of policy to promote that industry then, to my mind, the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, as guardians of regional development should tell them so. This is what I would like the department to do.

This department should also advise the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources about the Bay of Fundy tides project to which reference has been made previously. If the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) feels that this is a good project, and that it will help out the area, then I think it is his duty to advise the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) to provide the necessary funds for it. I do not think any department should be allowed to cut back on any projects that will help a region which the Department of Regional Economic Expansion is trying to assist.