

Adjournment Debate

Before referring to the results of July, 1984, I should like to backtrack for a moment to say that the tier system is dependent upon census districts and each census district is looked at to determine how much unemployment exists. In July, 1984, in Newfoundland, there were seven census districts under tier 4 and three under tier 3; in Prince Edward Island, two under tier 4 and one under tier 3; in Nova Scotia, six under tier 4, three under tier 2 and one under tier 1; in New Brunswick, seven under tier 4, six under tier 3 and two under tier 2; in Quebec, there were 14 census districts under tier 4, 46 under tier 3, 13 under tier 2 and three under tier 1; in Ontario, there were six under tier 3, 27 under tier 2 and 20 under tier 1; and in Alberta, every census district is under tier 1. I think I have made my point. In other words, Alberta is the only province which is fully tier 1 and fully denied any access through the tier system to the economic development funds which are available to other provinces. I find that to be totally unacceptable. We have had the Minister rise in the House and say that they were attempting to do away with the tier system. I would suggest that it is long overdue and that it should be done away with.

In some areas of the Province of Alberta there is massive unemployment, unemployment to a level unheard of in the past 10 to 15 years. We have experienced a downturn in the economy which businessmen and other people in the province are calling a depression, all due, I might add, to the National Energy Program introduced in the House by the former Government. Fair is fair. There is massive unemployment. The province cannot do it on its own. The citizens of the Province of Alberta are only requesting that they be treated in exactly the same way as citizens in other parts of the country. It is obvious when one goes through, as I did, province by province and finds that of 15 census districts, all of the census districts of Alberta, not one census district is eligible for regional economic expansion funds under any other tier but tier 1, it leaves them very little by way of assistance. I hope that the Minister will take my suggestion and move quickly to right an injustice that I feel is taking place at present.

● (1815)

Mrs. Monique Bernatchez-Tardif (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to the question from the Hon. Member for Athabasca (Mr. Shields) concerning the possibility of designating parts of Alberta as tier 2 under the Industrial Regional Development Program.

Tier designations for purposes of IRDP as originally designed are based on an index of development which is a little more than the unemployment my colleague was talking about. It classified the country's 260 census divisions into four tier groups according to selective measures of economic need. The statistical measures used consist of the level of unemployment, the level of personal income and the fiscal capacity of the province in which the census division is located.

According to the Act and regulations, tier designations are reviewed once a year for possible adjustment in light of

changing economic conditions. This is done by recalculating the development index using the latest annual data available in each census division on income and unemployment.

As a result of the latest update of the tier designation announced on July 1, 1985, Alberta's 15 census divisions are still in tier 1. The new 1985 designations are based on indicators that measure employment and income conditions during the period 1982-1984. As such, the new index reflects changing economic circumstances as well as the differential impact of these changes in Alberta and various parts of the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, it shows that classification and reclassification of census districts under the IRDP is being done on the basis of objective statistical data, using a formula provided under the Act and Regulations. The annual review of the development index is mandatory under the Act and constitutes the only procedure for updating tier classification in accordance with the requirements of the Industrial and Regional Development Act and Regulations. Any attempt to change the classification would require an amendment to the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I realize there is no regional designation system that operates perfectly in all circumstances and is able to guide Government assistance to industry with absolute fairness and objectivity. The Minister is also aware of the shortcomings of the system and continues to consider other ways of improving the criteria now being used for tier designation. That is why the development index and the tier method used by the IRDP are being reviewed by the Department.

As soon as a more objective and useful method is developed, Mr. Speaker, the Minister is prepared to formulate recommendations for making the legislative changes that will make it possible to implement such a method.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, the ERDA program now in effect could be used to arrange a subsidiary agreement with Alberta, and the Minister soon hopes to be able to sign an agreement of this kind that will be beneficial to the people of that province.

[English]

FISHERIES—SALE OF CANNED TUNA. (A) REQUEST FOR MINISTER'S RESIGNATION. (B) BASIS FOR MINISTER'S RULING

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): The last remaining question, Mr. Speaker, in the great Canadian tuna scandal relates to whether the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) in fact knew of this issue many weeks or even months before the matter reached its culmination in the House of Commons recently. On Friday, September 20, in a press conference the Prime Minister said that he had only heard about this problem the day before and had acted immediately on it. He said that in quite an explicit and firm way. The former Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, on the same day, in a scrum after Question Period said that that in fact was not true. He said that this whole issue in detailed form was in the Prime Minister's Office several weeks ago. It is interesting to note that the former Minister of Fisheries and Oceans survived the