

Industry, Science and Technology

ment and all the other things that Canadians down here take for granted.

We are being told that there will be more funding for the Native Economic Development Program, but I made the point earlier that to our knowledge, and the Minister responsible for Industry, Science and Technology made that statement inadvertently at a committee meeting last week, the Native Economic Development Program which was introduced some years ago by the Liberal Government is now being phased out. From what the Minister said, it sounds as if the Government will consolidate some already existing programs under Indian Affairs and call it a new program, the Canadian aboriginal development agency or something along those lines, into which no new money will be put. Combining them will make it seem as if there is more money coming in, and if that is not a cut in native economic development programs, then I do not know how one defines a cut.

So we are already being cut in our other programs, not in economics, other than the ones that I mentioned, but in social programs such as those under the auspices of the Secretary of State for Native Associations. Those programs have already been cut. But the Government will come back and say that it has already raised the budget for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. In fact, it is required by law to do so by the agreements it has with the Inuvialuit and the James Bay Cree and as a result of other land claims settlements made in the past. It has no choice but to raise those. But any way it can cut down on the funding for native programs, whether economical, social or otherwise, it is doing so.

• (1650)

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Madam Speaker, I rise today on debate on this important piece of legislation—

Madam Speaker: I thought the Member was rising on questions and comments as there were a few minutes left. I should advise the House that we have now completed the first eight hours of debate. From now on, interventions will be limited to a 10 minute period.

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): Madam Speaker, I rise today in debate on this very important piece of legislation, Bill C-3, which does more than just establish a new

Department of Industry, Science and Technology. It goes on to repeal the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion Act and make consequential amendments to other Acts.

This part of the legislation is extremely telling and very disconcerting for people in Atlantic Canada. In order to understand what this Bill means, we have to look at regional development in the last 25 years in this country. In the 1960s, a Liberal Government put into effect the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. It did that in the 1960s because it was recognized that it was not good enough to have 12, 15 or 20 line departments with their programs impacting across the country and not have a specific mandate to look after regional development and wealth redistribution in this country. So in the wisdom of that government, it was decided a department was needed. The need for that department went almost as a superministry throughout all government programs and all of the departments. The department had a very specific mandate. It was to make sure that government policy and government programs were aware of the need for wealth redistribution and the real need for regional development programs in Atlantic Canada and northern Ontario, in the North and the West.

In subsequent years, the same Liberal government changed the legislation and turned it into the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion to more closely twin industry with economic development in the regions. That was an important change. In 1984, we saw a departure from this legislative method of redistributing wealth in Canada. We saw a new government elected which was bent on bottom line profits. That new government did not share the commitment to Canada where it did not matter where you lived, whether in Atlantic Canada, the West, whether you lived in a Liberal province, a Conservative province, a Liberal riding, a Conservative riding or an NDP riding. The Government felt that the bottom line always had to be the deciding factor. What it did starting in 1984, under the guise of budget cutting and austerity measures, was to significantly cut back the commitment to regional development.

During the 1988 campaign this Government opposite made much ado while travelling across this country by telling Canadians that regional development programs were safe, that the Liberals and the NDP were lying by