

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

The minister took the question as notice and replied the following Monday to the effect that there has been no consultation with Imperial Oil except that four months ago when the decision to locate at Edmonton had been made by Imperial Oil, Imperial Oil came to the Department of Regional Economic Expansion and asked them if any money was kicking around for such a development. The reply was in the negative, that Edmonton was not a designated region and that oil refineries did not qualify. I find it beyond belief that in the case at least of major economic decisions on the part of Canadian industry, consultation with DREE is not automatic.

The short-term economic effects of Imperial Oil's decision to shut down refineries at Calgary, Regina and Winnipeg in order to consolidate at Edmonton are imposing, but the potential long-term effects on the cities involved defy calculation. Yet there was no obligation on the part of Imperial Oil to consult nor, it would seem, did the minister or his department feel any need to make inquiries of Imperial Oil or to discuss with that company the possibility of locating its new facility in the slower growth areas of Winnipeg or Regina. If such consultations are not automatic, how can we ever hope to lessen regional economic disparities?

The parliamentary secretary to the minister, or whoever is replying on the minister's behalf, may say that the legislation does not make such demands. I say if it does not, it should. Otherwise DREE will never do much more than give grants to companies which have already made up their minds to locate or expand in a given area. It will simply act as a slush fund. It will never effect a major relocation of industry in this country, which is absolutely necessary if the regional economic disparities which exist in Canada are to be removed.

Indeed, the very procedures adopted by the department militate against its being able to have any major impact upon the structuring of our economy. A company cannot, for example, submit several possible locations for a plant to DREE for its consideration and weigh offers for each of the locations; it must submit a single location. Then if it is to know what is available in another area in any definitive way, it must reject the first offer from DREE and submit another plan. Thus, to a large extent companies must reach their decision without any meaningful assistance from DREE. Hence, it is not surprising that Imperial Oil approached DREE only after its decision was made.

In a television interview on this subject I argued that unless DREE has the power and the necessary procedures to exert a major influence on the decisions of industries about the location of their facilities, it will never effectively deal with the problem of raising up areas of slow economic growth. The minister said in reply on the same program that the people of Canada were not yet ready for government to tell private enterprise that it must locate a facility in Vancouver, in Halifax or in Winnipeg.

• (10:20 p.m.)

I am not sure that the people of the economically disadvantaged regions of this country are not ready to see the government engage in directive economic planning as opposed to indicative planning. I am certainly ready to try it, since indicative planning has done nothing to close economic gaps in this nation. In the five or six years

during which some attempts at indicative planning have been made, the gaps have actually widened.

But I am not even going so far as to ask the government that the department direct industry. I am simply asking the government to ensure that consultations take place; that the people know that if slow growth regions are to be overlooked by an industry, the government at least has made some effort to ensure that that region would not be overlooked. Surely such action is the least one could expect from a department supposedly dedicated to the removal of regional economic disparities even if, for some reason beyond my understanding, the government will not give that department the directive powers without which it can never accomplish its stated task.

Thus, I would ask again if the minister would consult with Imperial Oil to see if there is not some way to have its decision to locate in Edmonton reviewed and to have the slower growth areas of Regina and Winnipeg considered again. Moreover, I would ask the minister, if Imperial is to move out of Winnipeg despite any hoped for future efforts of DREE, to seek assurances that crude oil will continue to be supplied to the Shell Oil refinery in Winnipeg by the pipeline which is owned by a subsidiary of Imperial Oil and which now supplies both the Imperial refinery and the Shell refinery.

It would seem to me that if the Imperial refinery in Winnipeg is converted to a storage facility for finished products as projected, the pipeline might well be converted to carry only finished products, which might necessitate the closing of the Shell refinery by cutting off its crude. I hope the minister will seek assurances that this will not be the case.

Finally I want to make two comments with respect to the proposed consolidation, which are not strictly relevant to the matter under consideration but which should be heard. First, I think Imperial Oil should be commended for the fact that it gave its employees, the communities involved and the governments involved three years' notice of its eventual intentions. This has allowed the employees some time in which to seek alternative employment and the communities time in which to seek alternative employment and the communities time to plan and to adjust. It also allowed the governments, even if this one is seemingly unwilling to do so, time to get involved in the decision. That is commendable.

On the other hand, the means by which the employees were informed by Imperial Oil of the decision was absolutely reprehensible. Unless the men happened to be at work at the time the announcement was made, they found out their jobs were in jeopardy by reading it in the newspapers or hearing it on the radio. Men on another shift, on day off or on holiday were not given the courtesy of advance notice. Many men with 15, 20, 25 and even 35 years of loyal service to that company suffered the indignity of being informed of the jeopardy to their jobs by people unconnected with Imperial Oil, friends and relatives who happened to hear about it. That is unforgivable. As I said, that is beside the point but I think it should be noted.

The major points are: Will the minister consult again with Imperial Oil to see whether that decision cannot be changed and, if it cannot be changed, will the minister