

We also had serious misgivings about the bill because we felt it jeopardized the principles of a regional development program, and that in fact it might create some serious problems for the future of such programs. Now that we have gone through the committee stage and have had a chance to question the minister as well as hear witnesses who are experts in the field of regional development, we have to say that this is poor legislation. I suggest that the bill before us at the present time will emasculate the regional development program.

At the committee we heard from the minister and the deputy minister regarding this bill. They did not present an opening statement, they simply said they would answer any questions we had. That is a rather unusual procedure, one which I find is becoming too common on the part of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand). The minister and the deputy minister simply took the attitude: We are alright, Jack; everything is fine. Just leave it to us and we will see that everything is fixed up.

This was not good enough, Mr. Speaker, and we heard from a number of witnesses. We heard from representatives of the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council and the Canadian Council of Rural Development. We heard from Professor Tom Brewis, probably the outstanding authority on regional development programs and policies in Canada. This witness made it quite clear that this bill would scuttle the regional development program. Every one of the witness presented serious criticisms of Bill C-205; and this is a very serious matter, all of them expressed a growing disillusionment with the government's regional development programs as they have been brought forward to the present time.

Then, we heard from the minister and the deputy minister again but they had the same approach. We had to pry information from them. They refused to prepare a considered reply to the representations that had been made by the various expert witnesses who came before the committee. At one point the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion tried to slough off some of the evidence that had been presented by indicating that these were just words of a professor, why should we worry about them? I think it is a very serious matter when the minister refuses to give serious consideration to the points of criticism presented not only by members of the House and members of the Regional Development Committee, but also by some of the expert witnesses who appeared before that committee.

As a matter of fact, the minister and the deputy did not even consider it important enough to have a person there to monitor the evidence presented by the witnesses. They were not in position to reply to some of the points raised earlier in the evidence. I should state that the Parliamentary Secretary to the minister was present. He was very attentive and took part in the proceedings. I was pleased with that part of the performance at least. The minister and the deputy were not in a position to adequately answer the points presented to members of the committee. They were not in a position to adequately answer the criticisms and questions put forward by mem-

bers when they came before the committee the second time.

Consequently, we moved a number of amendments at the committee stage of the proceedings. Most of them were designed to make the best possible bill out of a poor piece of legislation. We at least tried to make it more workable by giving the legislation before us some focus and direction in order that it might be based on some sort of sound principles of regional development. All of these amendments were summarily rejected by the Liberal majority on the committee. I suggest one reason they rejected them all is that most of those members were absent for the testimony of the witnesses. They did not consider the evidence important enough to stay and hear it being presented by representatives of the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, the Canadian Council of Rural Development and Professor Brewis. Most of them attended only when they thought their presence was needed to rubberstamp the government's legislation. When amendments were moved by opposition members they would say "no" before the amendments were even read.

**Mr. McBride:** That is not a fair comment.

**Mr. Burton:** That is true, and the hon. member knows it.

**Mr. McBride:** It is not.

**Mr. Burton:** The hon. member was one of those who took part in the proceedings and he knows very well that is true. The only thing he could do was make noise, such as he is making right now. I suggest the performance of most of the Liberal members of this committee was disgraceful. They performed a poor service for their constituents and the people of Canada in the way they conducted themselves during the committee proceedings this week.

Today, we are moving one amendment which would make a major difference to this legislation. It would change the direction of the government's programs and the direction in which it is trying to take this legislation with Bill C-205. The amendment which has just been presented to the House provides for public equity in undertakings where there is substantial assistance provided by the people of Canada for new developments.

● (12:50 p.m.)

The amendment which has been moved contemplates a Canada Development Corporation. The government said it would introduce this legislation at this session. When it will come forward is difficult to say at the present time. The government has given no indication. Possibly it will be one of the never-never things for which this government has become rather well known. "Never-never" certainly can be applied to its policies in respect of a Canada Development Corporation. The amendment before us, together with other complementary developments such as the formation of the Canada Development Corporation, would assist in planning a comprehensive