

*National Economic Development Board*

While inviting experts to appear before it, that board should try to obtain the views of some groups on the means of improving the economy of such and such an area, of such and such a sector or field of activity.

The functions and responsibilities of that national economic development board are but vaguely described in the bill. This bill should, for instance, include a study of the present economic situation, some searching as to the causes for this slowing up in the last five years. The board should also consider whether we are making the best use of our resources, evaluate our efforts in the field of research, and determine whether industry and the various governments are spending enough money to that end.

The board should also decide whether our present taxation procedure could not be improved in order to make our export trade more competitive on world markets.

It should also check, if possible, the fiscal charges imposed on foreign industries by their respective governments, which industries are competing with us on world markets.

Under its terms of reference, the national economic development board should also be authorized to look into the possibility or the advantages of making available to our industries, especially the small and medium-sized industries, acknowledged experts in their own field.

The convertibility of certain industries to the manufacture of goods that are more in demand and actually saleable, should be suggested and promoted.

The board could also try to ascertain how many new dwellings should be built each year.

Is this to be 50,000, 100,000 or 150,000? I feel the government should have this information.

The board should also be authorized to study the fluctuations of our economy over the last 10 or 15 years, to assess the causes of those variations, to set the annual rate of growth of our domestic production and to suggest means of maintaining it.

Many other duties could be assigned to the board. It could advise the government on the means of improving our service to exporters, of providing our industries with better means of coping with international competition, of making better use of the information available at the dominion bureau of statistics, of promoting the decentralization of industry and of studying the effect of immigration on our economy.

[Mr. Legare.]

I know that a large number of immigrants represent a new wealth, on the cultural level for instance, but I have never been able to ascertain what was the true influence of immigration on our economy, and it seems to me that there should be a way to get an approximate figure, to reach the conclusion that immigration is a source of wealth, in this or that area.

According to the bill, Mr. Speaker, the board will have to report to parliament once a year. I think that the relevant section should be amended so that the reports would be made more frequently. In fact, if the government is satisfied with an annual report, parliament will find itself in the position in which it is now with regard to other crown corporations, in particular the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Trans-Canada Air Lines and the Canadian National Railways.

The government failed in its more or less well-advised efforts to create the climate necessary to the progress of our economy. That is the reason why we need a concerted effort today in order to get out of the situation where we find ourselves now.

Nobody can deny that it is possible to improve the present growth of our production. Nobody can deny that our standard of living can still be improved and nobody will deny either that the number of the unemployed is too high, but everyone will recognize surely that with more funds available we shall be in a better position to carry out our responsibilities in the world.

That is the reason why the official opposition supports this measure and hopes that the board will be established without delay so that we do not see a recurrence of what the government has done with ARDA and many of its other undertakings.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned ARDA because it was discussed for two years before it was passed, and even if it has been in operation for several months, I know that the work in practical terms, has not progressed much.

In brief, to start the economy moving again while maintaining monetary stability, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Nowlan) must exert his influence on two different planes: on the one hand, he must develop investments and on the other, he must stimulate consumption and exports.

But our expansion and that fresh impetus to our economy must come about without the stability of prices being jeopardized.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we do not have to worry too much about the impact of the