

Adjournment Debate

There are provisions in the Canadian Constitution that call upon the Government of Canada to provide equal opportunities for all Canadians regardless of where they may live in the country. I suggest that the refusal by the Government of Canada to respond in a detailed way to questions about a very important statement made by our chief negotiator leaves reasonable, objective individuals to question the seriousness of a commitment the Government may make with regard to regional economic development. It raises fear, animosity and concern among Canadians who are receiving benefits under the programs of, say, the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion as well as those of Crown corporations. It raises fear because people may be terminated.

Take a look at a community such as Terrace Bay in northern Ontario. It is under the threat of major lay-offs as a result of the 15 per cent countervailing duty on softwood lumber. Will the Government terminate all forms of assistance under the Labour Adjustment Program for that particular sector? Will the Government terminate unemployment insurance benefits or make that a major concession? We have to know so that we can intelligently look—and I say this through you, Sir, to the Government—at the options being presented.

For the Minister to rise in his place and give a nothing answer to an important statement made by Canada's chief negotiator is not only irresponsible, it is an abdication of one's oath of office, an abdication of responsibility to the House of Commons and an abdication of responsibility to the Canadian people. In particular, it is a betrayal to the regions of Canada which depend to a large extent on the national programs of the national Government. I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary will clearly spell out today what that statement by Canada's chief negotiator means in its full impact.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, it means, among other things, that our Government is attempting to take us out of the uncaring morass that we inherited from a Government the Member supported. We are attempting to change the direction of Canada's economic future. What we are attempting to do is to recognize that which the former Government did under mounds of rhetoric for so many years

and which now affects the lives and the livelihood of every Canadian.

The Liberal Government hid from us the truth about the Auto Pact. The Liberals never told us the truth about the softwood industry. They hid it and buried it. They never told us our industries were in danger. I ask my distinguished friend from Cape Breton, when did he ever hear from a Liberal Government that within 12 months the Auto Pact would come to an end? When did he even hear that suggested? Look at the fishery, the forest industry, the Christmas tree industry. When the hell did we ever hear from you people about the potential danger these traditional industries faced?

● (1815)

The Minister said in response to the Hon. Member the other day that we are doing much. The question is of course serious. If I can go back to questions raised by the Hon. Member a couple of weeks ago, he knows we have a pulp and paper subagreement with Newfoundland worth \$46 million. We have a highway transportation subagreement with that province worth \$180 million. There was a forest resource development subagreement with Newfoundland worth \$48 million. There was a meat processing facilities subagreement with Prince Edward Island worth \$10.5 million. There was a tourism development subagreement with Prince Edward Island worth \$8.9 million. An industrial competitiveness subagreement with that same province was worth \$8.5 million. There was a technology transfer subagreement with Nova Scotia worth \$34 million. There was a Sysco modernization subagreement with Nova Scotia worth \$157.1 million. We are labouring on and I think I share the Hon. Member's concern with the final outcome. We all listened to Premier Buchanan this afternoon.

I could go on for some considerable period of time but let me simply wind up by saying that we are concerned about the impact of these programs. We are also concerned about the development of new industry and creation of new jobs in the disparate regions of our country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 3(1).

The House adjourned at 6.23 p.m.