

National Economic Development Board

The essential difference between this party and the old line parties is that planning, as it has been outlined by the Minister of Finance and as it is talked of by the Liberal party, is not really planning at all. It is rather the gathering of economic data, the making of economic forecasts and studies and the setting of some desirable economic goals. If we are going to have effective planning, if we are going to put plans into operation, we must have the power to intervene in the economy. We must have the power to intervene, first of all, by setting up a national investment board to direct investment into those economic activities which will produce employment and which will increase production. If decisions have to be made as to where capital will be allocated, surely we cannot leave decisions like those to the free play of the market. Surely, those are decisions that have to be made in terms of the public interest rather than in terms of private profit.

The Chairman: Order; I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Mr. Douglas: Will the committee permit me to mention the other thing which I think is important?

The Chairman: Will the committee give unanimous consent to extending the time of the hon. member?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Douglas: I just want to say that the other agency which should be used in providing for this type of intervention would be an economic development fund which would give the government the power to make money available either to private enterprise for the development of certain resources or the processing of our primary products, or to a co-operative organization for the development of new industry, or for investment in the public sector. I was very much impressed with what the hon. member for Vancouver Centre said, and I agree with him. When it is demonstrated that private enterprise is not able to develop certain industries, to promote economic goals in certain areas, then we should not hesitate to use public enterprise for that purpose. The Polymer Corporation to which he has referred is a very good example. The Eldorado mining development is another example. What the British have done with the coal and steel development in Wales and the hydro development in northern Scotland are indicative of what can be done by public ownership and public investment. Therefore, we contend that unless we are prepared to make our plans effective, unless the government is prepared to give some direction to

investment, and to set up a very large development fund which will make government funds available to private enterprise, co-operative enterprise or public enterprise, we are not really going to have effective planning.

I submit, Mr. Chairman, that everyone now is in favour of planning. What we have to decide is what kind of planning it is going to be, who is going to do it and in whose interest it is going to be done. Canada has to make the choice; either we are going to plan or we are going to perish. But planning, if it is to save this country, and if it is to provide full employment and promote economic growth, must be effective planning. That means planning should be done by a government which is prepared to put its plans into effect, to intervene where necessary in the economy with the object of raising the standard of living of the Canadian people, providing jobs for Canadian citizens and increasing Canada's wealth and production from year to year.

Mr. Woolliams: Will the hon. member permit a question at this stage? I did not want to interrupt him. I noticed when he was speaking, towards the end of his remarks, his reference to public investment seemed to be fairly narrow and he appeared to believe in freedom of enterprise. May I suggest to him that his philosophy in that regard has changed somewhat since he was electioneering as premier of Saskatchewan in 1944.

Mr. Douglas: If I am permitted to answer that question, Your Honour, I would be glad to do so. I campaigned for the job of premier of Saskatchewan in 1944. If the hon. member takes the trouble to look at the first speech I made in the Saskatchewan legislature he will see where I said we proposed to develop a mixed economy, that whatever could be handled by private enterprise and co-operatives would be operated by them and we would assist them and co-operate with them, but what could not be handled by private enterprise and the co-operatives would be handled by public enterprise. This we did when in office. The distribution of gas, bus transportation, and air transportation were all under public ownership. I shall give my hon. friend a list of the things in the federal economy which, if they cannot be handled effectively by private and co-operative enterprise should, in our opinion, be operated by public enterprise.

(Translation):

Mr. Cook: Mr. Chairman, the principle of this resolution for the setting up of a national economic development board is so good that I wonder why it was not submitted to the house before now.