

Regional Unemployment

We also need a three to five-year program to upgrade highways to all-weather standards. This has been promised for about six years but nothing has been done.

With respect to ports and shipping we must guard against the proliferation and development of ports so that we do not have them competing for a level of activity which is insufficient to support more than one. What has been the value to eastern Quebec of the millions of dollars poured into Gros Cacouna? The port is not in use and there appears to be no use for it. Is this another example of little or no consultation or co-operation?

There has been a startling failure on the part of the government to understand the reality of today's movement of containerized cargo. For example, Halifax does not really compete with Montreal; rather it competes with the ports along the Atlantic seaboard. We have to recognize this if we are to develop programs that are integrated and related to the part of the country from which most of us come who are here this evening. Failure to recognize this has cost us expanded container facilities in Halifax. There was poor co-operation between the federal government and the government of New Brunswick with respect to the expansion of the Rodney terminal in the port of Saint John.

What is DREE doing about these things? What is it doing about the rationalization of an over-all port authority—perhaps something like the Port of New York authority—with not only intraprovincial authority but perhaps interprovincial authority as well. What is DREE doing about the rehabilitation of the Halifax shipyard which by next September or October will lose 1,000 jobs? In committee a few days ago the minister told us that as far as he knew no talks had taken place in the last three or four weeks.

These are all areas that require the closest co-operation between the Department of Transport and the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. Unfortunately there do not seem to be any areas of close co-operation between the two departments. Perhaps the minister would look into these matters in the near future.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, an hon. member opposite seems to be trying to prove that his head size and his I.Q. are the same. If he would sit down and be quiet I will try to untangle some of the web of misinformation that has been woven here this afternoon.

● (2150)

I have sat here listening to all of today's debate, trying to see if the opposition had any purpose in presenting this trumpery motion which the House has considered today. The only conclusion I can come to, having listened to all opposition speeches in this debate, is that they had to include five or six different topics in the motion because they are so sterile of policy that they could not spend a full day discussing the one subject of regional economic expansion. They had to include in the motion the subjects of fiscal policy, transportation, energy,

[Mr. Forrestall.]

trade, economic expansion—the whole bag as it were. Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a single, coherent policy statement enunciated by hon. members opposite.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rodriguez: Tell us about New Brunswick.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, there is another member opposite who is yelling out and becoming a bit of a pain in the neck, although some members may have a lower opinion of him than that. This afternoon we heard the opposition gloating about this country's unemployment rate. But not one of them bothered to mention that in the last ten years there has been an absolutely phenomenal growth in this country's labour force and a phenomenal growth in employment.

Mr. Alkenbrack: And unemployment.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): But they do not want to talk about these facts, because if they were to say something positive they would have to expose the fact that they cannot put forward any policy alternatives.

Mr. Rodriguez: Tell us what is happening in your own part of the country.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): The hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) was highly critical of the government's monetary and fiscal policy, but not once did he put forward an alternative solution. He criticized DREE for being insensitive to the needs of the provinces and regions of this country, but his criticism is absolute proof that he does not know what he is talking about when he talks about DREE. In the province of New Brunswick, for example, there are presently in existence ten subsidiary agreements under GDA dealing with highways, forestry, agricultural development, industrial development, the Kent region pilot project, the King's Landing historical settlement, the Saint John and Moncton arterial highways, tourism, planning, and minerals and fuels. Every one of those is a matter of provincial jurisdiction. The federal government is giving to the province under these agreements a total of \$150 million.

The hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) complained that the Department of Regional Economic Expansion is not co-operating with provinces in developing a plan for the regions. I suggest that not one provincial government in the Atlantic region would countenance for a minute an area of another province getting special treatment at the expense of another province. My colleague, the hon. member for Mada-waska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin), this afternoon referred to the behaviour of certain provinces. I suggest that the actions of New Brunswick illustrated in a classic way the hon. member's contention. The government of that province has been asking the federal government, and specifically the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, to solve all the ills of that province so that the provincial government can wash its hands of them. Indeed a provincial minister was heard to say at a