

Dominion-Provincial Relations

out of order. I am grateful to the Minister of Finance that he did not raise the point then.

I would point out that in opening the conference that produced the legislation or as a result of which we have the legislation that is now before us, the Prime Minister said that the purpose of that conference was to take steps to assure the ability and capacity of federal and provincial governments to discharge their respective functions. Surely involved in the whole question of these federal-provincial fiscal arrangements is the question as to what is their purpose. The Prime Minister went into unemployment, health insurance and these other matters. Surely we are entitled to express our views as to the means that are necessary to carry out the intent of a federal-provincial approach to the economic problems of this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rea): Order. As everyone realizes, of course, this bill covers the relation between the provinces and the dominion with reference to revenues. Hon. members will realize that we cannot allow them to start going into unemployment and other fields, as happened this morning. I see no reason why those fields cannot be mentioned. However, I do not think they should be gone into as far as debate is concerned, so there would be a great deal of discussion on the matter. They might be mentioned in passing.

Mr. Pickersgill: First they gag the provinces and then they gag the House of Commons.

Mr. Fleming: The Speaker is in charge here, not Bonavista-Twillingate.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): He is too ridiculous to pay any attention to.

Mr. Kirk: I have followed this debate very carefully and have been in the house practically all the time since the resolution was first introduced. I have listened rather carefully to the discussions that have taken place and the points of view that have been brought forward, and in practically every case I felt that they met very carefully and accurately the words of the Minister of Finance when, in introducing the resolution, he said the government attaches very great importance to the measure for it looks upon it as one that will bring aid to the provinces and municipalities in this country and will be effective also in meeting the problem of unemployment. It was because of his original comments that I felt, sir, I would be in order in mentioning these matters but not debating them at length. I am trying to show that there would be even greater benefits to the

Atlantic provinces if further action were taken along the lines I have suggested.

I suggest that it would be of great help to us in the Atlantic provinces if assistance were given to the new British Caribbean federation and if long range plans were developed so that we could expand trade with that area. So far as my own province is concerned, in fact along the whole seacoast of the Atlantic provinces, we had our greatest development and economic activity in the days when we were trading by water with other seacoast areas.

Another thing I believe would be of even more help would be assistance in the establishment of trunk highways so that we in the Atlantic provinces could bring our products not only to the provinces of central Canada but to the thickly populated area of the United States, particularly the New England states. I believe further thought should have been given to the matter before the bill was introduced, with a view to following other methods to assist transportation within the Atlantic provinces and improve our facilities through the building of trunk highways, the construction of a causeway to Prince Edward Island, and extension of coastal services in the newest province of Newfoundland.

The study originally suggested some months ago and started prior to last June with respect to the effect of the Maritime Freight Rates Act should be continued and it should be decided whether or not the change from 20 to 30 per cent, that is the 50 per cent increase in the preference, which was given last spring, is adequate at the present moment. While that is being done, of course, there should be provision made for a continuing study of this particular problem. So far as the coal mines are concerned, as a rule my confere the hon. member for Inverness-Richmond usually speaks in the house on that subject, as it is one in which he is very well versed and with respect to which he is most qualified to speak. But I should like to say that I believe further assistance should be extended. There should be some sign of imagination on the part of the government, some program of scientific and industrial research as to the possibilities of the use of coal and other natural resources as another means of expanding employment and increasing the per capita income of the maritime provinces.

In doing that I feel that a good deal of thought should have been given and must be given to the production and marketing of coal. If necessary there should be greater and more flexible use of subventions, not only with respect to the use of coal within the maritime provinces but also in central Canada.