

*Atlantic Provinces Power Development*

very vague and rather strange. As found on page 3089 of *Hansard* for January 9, the minister made this statement:

I would hope that in the future the province of Newfoundland some day could probably think in terms of coming into this wider field of the Atlantic provinces in handling power in that area.

I have pondered very deeply, Mr. Speaker, as to what that statement means. I listened very carefully when the minister was speaking this afternoon and I am sorry that he did not make any reference to it whatever. But I do hope that when he replies in winding up this debate he will tell us exactly what he had in his mind for Newfoundland when he made that statement. Farther down the same page the minister had this to say:

In regard to Newfoundland particularly, we know and expect, from the ordinary logic of the situation, that for the short-range plans in Newfoundland there may be need for transmission lines there that would help their economics and their power situation by switching surpluses to deficit areas at times of the day or in times of the year.

The minister did make some reference to this statement this afternoon when he opened the debate on the bill. He did tell us that possibly the bill could be used to grant benefits to the thermal power station at St. John's. The hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Browne) went a great deal further. He enlarged on what the minister said and went so far as to say that this is exactly what Newfoundland needs. The hon. member for St. John's West listed a number of small power plants and suggested that all that was needed were transmission lines to link these plants so that they could shunt power from one station to another. If any of these stations that the hon. member for St. John's West listed today has any surplus power to transmit anywhere else in Newfoundland this is the first time we have heard anything about it.

I know that so far as my own district is concerned, the one section which is the most highly industrialized part of my riding, that is the Burin peninsula, is power hungry. The power for that area comes from the United Towns Electric Company, which was one of the companies mentioned by the hon. member for St. John's West today. The fish plants and the mines in that area are handicapped by the lack of power, not only high cost power but a lack of power. The people who live in that area are subjected to extremely high costs for the maintenance of their electrical appliances because there is not sufficient power to operate them properly.

I should like to point out still another aspect of this bill, Mr. Speaker, which I think has likely escaped the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Hamilton). Since he comes from the prairie

provinces I would not expect him to be aware of it at all, and it seems it has been overlooked also by his colleagues in the government who come from the Atlantic provinces. I refer to the impact that this bill will have on our fish processing industry. According to the title of this bill, it is a measure to provide assistance in respect of electric power development. The operative words in that title are "to provide assistance". Over and over again at the resolution stage and again today the minister emphasized that one of the ways in which the government was going to assist the two provinces concerned was to provide lower cost electricity.

In my own particular riding the main source of livelihood is the fishing industry. We have two phases of the fish industry. There is the fresh fish processing industry and the salt fish industry. Most of our salt fish has to be transported for processing to Nova Scotia. We in Newfoundland need to industrialize and process our salt fish in our own province because we need that as a source of employment. We need to retain in our province the wages of the employees which would result from processing our own salt fish. We are direct competitors in the salt fish industry with Nova Scotia, and we are already suffering very great handicaps as compared with the mainland provinces. The mainland salt fish processing plants are already fully amortized. Our own merchants in the fish business have made themselves liable for huge loans in setting up these plants. We are handicapped also by lack of transportation, and transportation costs on the mainland are far less than what they are in Newfoundland. These are two very great advantages which the maritime provinces enjoy over Newfoundland.

In addition to all this the federal government is stepping in and discriminating once more by giving the mainland people lower power costs. What this amounts to is that the federal government is interfering with private industry to such an extent that it is going to give an advantage to one businessman on the mainland as compared with another businessman in Newfoundland, both of whom are processing the same product. I do not believe the minister was aware of these facts. The result could be very serious. The obvious solution to the problem is to do the same for Newfoundland as you are doing for the maritime provinces. We are not asking for expensive plants. All we say is that if you are going to provide assistance to the maritime provinces to develop power on the mainland you should do the same for Newfoundland.