

● (1540)

I will now turn to another important issue facing Newfoundland, and that is resources. Newfoundland and Labrador obviously has a resource-based economy, but it has very little control over some of those resources. With Labrador Hydro, Newfoundland will receive virtually no benefits for decades to come. Some way must be found to settle the long-standing dispute between Newfoundland and Quebec over the Upper Churchill Falls contract so that other rivers in Labrador with great hydro potential can also be developed.

In oil we have proven off-shore resources which Canada needs, and every effort should be made to bring those oil-fields into production as soon as possible.

But it is the fishery that is the biggest problem, challenge and hope for Newfoundland. We do not control our major resource. What if British Columbia did not control its forestry, Alberta its oil, or Ontario its mines? The recent Canada-France dispute points to the need for Newfoundland to have much more of a say over the resource that determines the livelihood of so many thousands of its people. Without a meaningful role in fishery policy we will always be at the whims of others who do not really understand the plight of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who make their living from the sea. The Newfoundland and Labrador Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment, which reported last fall, paid special attention to the role of the fishery in the province's economy and offered 20 recommendations on the fishery alone. The commission's major recommendation was as follows:

... a Canada-Newfoundland fisheries policy board, with strong directive powers, should be established to devise and implement fisheries policies for Newfoundland consistent with national resource management objectives.

Some such mechanism to provide effective concurrent jurisdiction in fisheries is an essential element in providing Newfoundland with some degree of control over its future economic development.

Concerning transportation issues, Newfoundland's Minister of Finance, the Honourable John Collins, recently appealed to the federal government for a renewed sense of urgency for the implementation and continuation of certain major projects, including the Trans-Labrador Highway and other provincial transportation needs. Given Newfoundland's location and geography, the province has special transportation problems. The Gulf ferry service needs to be improved to preserve our connection with the mainland, as well as our tourist industry, especially if transportation deregulation results in airline cutbacks.

The Trans-Labrador Highway is essential to the development of Labrador and will benefit all of Canada, not just Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Trans-Canada Highway is not built to the same standards as in the rest of Canada, and it is estimated that it would cost several hundred million dollars to bring it up to national standards. Newfoundland cannot afford to share the cost of

that on a fifty-fifty basis. As with many other fifty-fifty cost-shared programs, there should be some recognition that our low fiscal capacity should be compensated by a better break on cost sharing.

In conclusion, I have tried to summarize briefly some of the major problems facing Newfoundland today. To deal with all of the major problems facing our province would be a lengthy, if not impossible, task to undertake at one time. The majority of these problems cannot be corrected by Newfoundland alone, but in most cases can be corrected with special help from the federal government. Certainly there have been tremendous benefits from Confederation, but very serious problems remain unresolved, and parity with the rest of Canada remains an elusive dream.

I believe in a strong Canada made up of strong healthy provinces where residents have the opportunity to decide for themselves whether they want to live or work there or go to some other province of their choice.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, many people from our poor provinces do not have that choice. A great many have to move away against their will, leaving family and friends behind. Our survival as a strong nation depends on the provinces' ability to make their own contribution. The people of Newfoundland do not want charity. We want to make a positive contribution to the well-being of our country and get rid of our status as a disadvantaged province.

Senator Frith: Well said, Senator Cochrane.

[English]

Senator Cochrane: As Premier Peckford would so poetically state, "Some day the sun will shine and 'have not' will be no more!"

Canada has an opportunity that few other countries have. It can virtually decide to eliminate the serious problems facing various regions of the country and has the resources to do so. However, history has proven that there are no quick-fix solutions. Many of these regional problems will be with us for many years to come, and it will take our combined resources and determination to overcome them. I am confident that the political will exists to address and overcome these regional disparities. I am quite pleased that this government has recognized—as previous administrations have—the need for closing the gap between the have and the have-not regions of this great nation, and that it has embarked upon a program to overcome some of these serious problems. Finding solutions to disparity is not a one-time effort; rather, it is an on-going process. In the years to come I hope that I can contribute to a better Canada by drawing attention to problems both regional and national in scope and by contributing to a collective search for solutions to them.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Hon. the Speaker *pro tempore*: As no other honourable senator wishes to participate in the debate, this inquiry is considered debated.