

Economic Rehabilitation

The hon. member also referred to the competition of residual oil with coal. That is a possibility, possibly a probability, but the maritimes are trying to help themselves in that regard.

I referred the other day and I do so again to the Nova Scotia Light and Power Company. If any company in the world should burn residual oil in their furnaces in the development of electricity, it is the Nova Scotia Light and Power Company Limited, whose plants are located on one side of Halifax harbour, and directly opposite on the other side of the harbour are the vast tanks and refining plants of the Imperial Oil Company where the residual oil of which he speaks is brought in from Venezuela. But the Nova Scotia Light and Power Company is not burning residual oil. It is burning Nova Scotia oil in its furnaces and proposes to continue to do so. It is thereby making a contribution of its own toward the stability of that industry and the economy of Canada generally.

Without taking further time in the discussion at this point, Mr. Speaker, I do want to emphasize again that there are contributions which a government can make. Regardless of moving people from one locality to another, forgetting for the moment the establishment of specific industries in any one place, if we decide on an over-all program for the development of this country as a whole, then in matters of transportation and other things a real contribution can be made. A study of resolutions such as that which has been moved by the hon. member for Cape Breton South this afternoon will, I trust, focus more attention on the problem and suggest approaches which this or any other government can make toward a solution.

Mr. F. A. Enfield (York-Scarborough): Mr. Speaker, I inject myself into the debate this afternoon at the risk of becoming known as the central Ontario expert on the maritimes. Of course the resolution as it is worded does not necessarily encompass strictly a discussion of the maritime area, although it is understandable that the particular interest of the hon. member for Cape Breton South in introducing it would be centred on what seems to me to be the perennial problems of that part of the country. I want to compliment the hon. member for Cape Breton South. I think he is one who has spent his life as a champion of the needy, the under dog, and he certainly does give effective expression to the needs and wants of the maritime region in general and his own riding in particular.

When I compliment him, I do not, of course, want him to feel that I agree entirely

with everything he has put forward for our consideration. He said he hoped the resolution would be thought-provoking, and certainly it is obvious that it has been just that. I think it is out of discussions carried on in a relaxed atmosphere such as this that we may often find very comprehensive and concrete proposals emerge. Let us hope that is the case here.

The resolution suggests that the government should give consideration to providing economic rehabilitation in areas where extreme hardships result from the closing down of the principal industries. Two methods of rehabilitation are suggested, I presume in order of preference. They are first, through direct government assistance and, second, through methods of assisting the movement of the people concerned.

It is rather awkward in these matters to get down to cases so far as direct government assistance is concerned, and so far the debate has been noticeably void of very many effective suggestions, shall I say, as to what direct government assistance might be provided. It is also obvious that the latter part of the resolution regarding assistance to people to move from one community to another is at best something placed there as a sort of distasteful alternative to anything else that might be done, as something that we do not want to be put in the position of having to carry out.

It seems to me that the problem is not so much one of looking after communities where a particular industry has failed, resulting in the people of the community being left without any employment, but rather is a general problem of the diversification of industry in Canada. Obviously a company town depending on one industry is in a very poor position if anything happens to that industry through labour difficulties, a depression, recession or anything else that may occur. It is the question of having a sufficiently broad diversification of industry in any locality, not merely in the maritimes, to provide a cushion so that when difficulty occurs there is something there to take up the slack.

This has been a problem in Canada since confederation. It was noticeable in the last depression of the 1930's when we were—and we still are to some extent—a country engaged mainly in the extractive industries or industries involving the development of our natural resources where the bulk of the product is exported. Obviously when trouble does arise in the world—and we saw world deflation in 1930—the effects on such an economy are felt immediately in a country