

*Atlantic Development Board Act*

Some resolutions appear on the order paper, especially that concerning feed grain for eastern Canada. It has been on the order paper for quite a long time, but it has not yet been passed; we would like it to be passed as soon as possible. There are also some reports to the effect that the price of milk in farming areas is not high enough and we would like the federal government to do for certain designated areas in Quebec what it is doing for the Atlantic provinces. We believe that this is an urgent matter. Words are not enough and the government should act.

[English]

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, there are a few observations one could make at this time in the debate, and in view of the interest shown by the government of which I had the honour to be the head in the Atlantic provinces in general I feel I should say something regarding the measure now before the house.

Let me say at once that this measure will receive the full support of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. However, what is being done and has been done has not met the needs and requirements of this nation to bring about a reasonable degree of equality of opportunity. The people of the maritimes have moved to all parts of Canada and the United States. This area has been the nursery of a very large proportion of the leaders of this nation and of all the provinces of Canada. Many people from the Atlantic provinces have migrated to other parts of Canada and United States because of the inequality of opportunity, and what each of us must try to do is bring about an economic regional advance in those areas of the country where the economy is not on a par with the rest of the nation.

Various explanations have been made for the exodus from the Atlantic area. What has been the motivation for this exodus? I think the recent study made by the organization for economic co-operation and development has given the answer, namely, that the broad range of opportunities in other areas, particularly in the United States, has brought about a continuing process of migration from this area. This has not been a recent development but rather a continuing one which has taken place since the 1880's.

What can we do about this situation? I think the government should have acted to meet the demands of APEC respecting the designation of the Atlantic provinces as a

[Mr. Grégoire.]

designated area. Various reasons were advanced why this area could not be designated, but those reasons have no effective basis in so far as Halifax, Dartmouth, Saint John and Fredericton are concerned. I again urge upon the government the need for action in this regard. The government must face up to the necessity of restoring a new sense of hope in these areas which find themselves today with great unemployment and without that degree of opportunity that is available in other parts of our nation. If action is taken in this regard I am sure Canadians everywhere will welcome it and the equalization of opportunity that will follow.

I cannot understand the reasoning that impels the Department of Industry to stand so firmly against a course of action which would be beneficial not only to the Atlantic provinces but to the nation as a whole. The problem is a large one. One must always attempt to look into the future. What will the next 25 years bring about?

• (4:10 p.m.)

One of the major problems in the maritimes has been the lack of a close relative connection with the central provinces. There are many who argue that railway transportation is a thing of the past. I do not believe or accept that argument. Today we must consider what the future may bring about, and one of the greatest obstacles to industrial development in the maritimes, with its vast coal resources, is the cost of transportation.

Various committees have studied this situation and have recommended that assistance be given. The Duncan commission and others have made recommendations. Large subsidies have been granted. Indeed, during our period of office we multiplied the subsidies on behalf of the coal areas, particularly in Cape Breton. The hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. MacInnis) and the hon. member for Cape Breton North and Victoria (Mr. Muir), both of whom have devoted themselves to this problem, have asked for action to be taken. The coal mining industry is today in a serious position. The \$25 million that was promised during the election period but which received no political support has not yet been determined upon and made available.

What is needed as I see it, and at the moment it is just a dream, is the development of an efficient, high speed, ground transportation system. I take the position that the economic life of the provinces by the sea has unquestionably been impeded by the lack of ground transportation facilities. The long