

Atlantic Development Board Act

it. I hope that the \$50 million will be committed very quickly. If it is, then, as we have twice shown to the house, we will see that a recommendation is made for a further replenishment.

I was very glad to hear the hon. member for Kings use the phrase "a gap filler" because I think I was the one who first used it. It has been my principle, as the minister responsible, to ensure that the Atlantic Development Board should never be allowed to spend a cent which could be made available from another agency. Mention has been made of \$1 billion to be spent over a ten-year period. That was surely never envisaged as the amount to be granted from the Atlantic Development Board but was to include all expenditures such as, for example, the causeway to Prince Edward Island. I might say that another \$30 million has already been committed by the Federal government for the development of trunk roads in the Atlantic provinces under the direct supervision of the board but not with the board's funds. That was done since the commitment of the \$100 million and before this addition of \$50 million.

Even in these days when we are faced with such staggering sums, this amount represents very large expenditures. I cannot entirely agree with the hon. member for Kings that we are not beginning to see some benefit. It is true that some of the projects which have been assisted by grants from the fund are only beginning to come into the stage at which they will appreciably add to the economy of the Atlantic provinces but I am absolutely convinced that as we improve transportation and make power cheaper and more accessible, together with the benefits brought about by the industrial sites that the board have so wisely established in all of the Atlantic provinces, we are going to have great dividends in the next three or four years.

I will resist the temptation to say that we should all take a new look at the whole question of transportation which, although it is a liability in some respects, is rapidly becoming an asset because the whole orientation of the international traffic is beginning to change and, oddly enough, it is the St. Lawrence Seaway which is changing it most through the increasing of trans-shipments which it presents. I predict, with quite a lot of confidence, that the ports of the Atlantic provinces, not just the ports of Halifax and Saint John, will in general see a tremendous

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

development as industrial sites precisely because they will enjoy in this air age and this age of monster ships advantages which they have not had for a long time.

However, all this is a very large subject which is not very directly related to this resolution. Let me conclude by expressing my appreciation to all the hon. members who have spoken for the constructive way in which they have approached this resolution.

Mr. MacLean (Queens): Mr. Chairman, it was not my intention to say anything but having noted that the Minister of Transport did not wish to be controversial I find that if he really wanted his wishes to be realized he could do so by ceasing to delude himself that in some connections he is speaking logically. I am now speaking of his reference to the amount of the fund. It is true that this is a means of financing but it is not realistic for him to say that because in the original act this method was not used the board had zero funds. It that were his logic he would find himself without any department to administer because his own department certainly has no funds. The money has to be voted annually. There is no great impediment to any emanation of the government being operated in the same fashion as the original concept of the Atlantic Development Board.

● (4:40 p.m.)

It could be argued that the present method might be an improvement. I am not going to argue about that, but it is not a case of something wholly good replacing something that was wholly bad or at least completely impotent as the minister, perhaps unintentionally, left the impression. It may be that he used phraseology of the kind he did because it was used so frequently for political purposes on different occasions.

Having said that, I do want to correct one impression that might have been inadvertently left by numerous spokesmen for the various parties regarding the unsatisfactory economic situation of the Atlantic provinces compared with the rest of Canada. I am not saying that the Atlantic provinces are not a good area in which to live or that they are not an area in which there are great opportunities for the future. I believe there are.

More important, it is natural to assume that the economic disadvantages of the Atlantic provinces as they now exist are all caused by an act of God and are therefore something over which man has no control. Many of our disadvantages are man-made. We