

*Atlantic Provinces Power Development*

I do not think this is, as some hon. members have suggested, a general case. This has been considered as a special case not only on this occasion but on many occasions in the past. The Atlantic provinces have made out both in this house and across the country a very special case. I do not intend to labour that point today. The hon. member who has just resumed his seat mentioned the per capita income of residents of the province of Saskatchewan. It has been generally known that the per capita income of people in the maritime provinces has been far below the average per capita income in other parts of the country. As a matter of fact, in 1926 the average per capita income of people in the Atlantic region was 38 per cent below the national average per capita income. In 1955, a considerable number of years later, it still had not improved very much and the average per capita income of the Atlantic region continued to lag behind the national average, remaining at 37 per cent.

The reasons given for this discrepancy were the fact that the maritimes lacked industry and that our transportation system worked to the detriment of the development of those provinces. Many reports have been made on this subject including the Duncan report and more recent ones which indicated two important reasons for the failure of the maritime provinces to keep abreast of the development in the other provinces. The first reason was the lack of cheap power to develop industries and the second was the high cost of transportation in the maritime provinces. In 1927 the Maritime Freight Rates Act was passed in an effort to relieve the situation as far as transportation was concerned but unfortunately with the increase in railway rates over the past 20 to 25 years the benefits of that act have been practically nullified in relation to the maritime provinces.

As far as power is concerned, we in the maritime provinces have had less development of power than any other part of Canada. In 1955, in my own province of New Brunswick, the average was about .26 horsepower per capita. The average for Canada was one horsepower per capita. Therefore, we were in the position of being just a little better than one-quarter the average for the whole of the country.

My hon. friends speak about discrimination. Other countries have recognized that certain sections of their countries were entitled to special consideration, and that was the idea back of this assistance to the Atlantic provinces. I have pointed out before in this house, as I point out now, Mr. Speaker, that we had good precedent for it. For instance, the southern states of the United States

suffered for years from lack of industry. The authorities at Washington decided that it was necessary to assist the southern states so that they could have the advantages of industry that other parts of the country had. What did they do? They did the same thing as this bill is trying to do for the Atlantic provinces. They helped them to produce cheap electric power, and today the southern states of the United States are enjoying an economy practically equal to that of other parts of the country. The help applied not only to the southern states. The same thing is going on in North Dakota; it is going on in several areas of the United States where it is considered necessary.

But I can point not only to the United States; I can point to Great Britain. The Durham area of Great Britain was considered to be backward as far as industry was concerned and needed help. Something was done for that area by Great Britain. The same thing was done in Wales. I could mention other parts of that country. The same thing has happened in Russia in the great industries of the rural area of northern Siberia, and so on. They have all been developed because that part of the country needed the assistance and it was given it by the central government. That is the reason why this special attention is being given to the Atlantic provinces.

I remember when the second world war was taking place. I asked the Right Hon. C. D. Howe, who was then minister of defence production, why it was that we in the maritime provinces did not receive some war industries. I was told then the reason was that we had no cheap power. We did not have the power. We have asked the same question since the last war ended and we have been given the same answer.

My hon. friends speak about discrimination. I will deal first with discrimination as far as Newfoundland is concerned. I do not believe there is any discrimination as far as that province is concerned, and no discrimination is intended as far as this government is concerned. We have heard from the members from Newfoundland. Read the year book that one of the hon. members from Newfoundland quoted a short time ago. They have abundance of waterpower in Newfoundland. They can produce electric power much more cheaply in Newfoundland, with the exception of transmission lines, than it can be produced in either New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. If we could produce power as cheaply in Nova Scotia and in New Brunswick as they can produce hydroelectric power in Newfoundland, aside from the transmission lines, we would not have this bill before us today; there would be no necessity for it.