

nation. Of course those of us who come from the region know all too well the painful history of how we have fallen behind over the past century and how we continue to fall behind, equalization and regional development grants notwithstanding.

What do I mean by the danger of entrenching regional disparity? Over the past century the face of Canada has changed, not only with the addition of new provinces but also with the expansion by the federal government of the boundaries of existing provinces. This has had the effect of placing the maritime provinces, and ultimately Newfoundland, at a serious disadvantage in terms of resource ownership. The benefits of the expansion of these boundaries are now being seen today in other parts of the country, and we are grateful and glad that there is prosperity in those provinces which have had their boundaries expanded.

The *Halifax Chronicle Herald* spelled it out very clearly at the weekend in a front page editorial, and I quote:

The maritime claim of today is fair and simple. It asks that it be compensated for earlier oversight. It seeks formal acceptance from the other partners in confederation of the right of the maritimes to consider as theirs that undersea land which is a natural extension of the property above sea level. It asks that the resources in that new territory be the property of the maritime provinces in the same sense that resources in formal federal lands now belong to the central and western provinces.

We have seen the boundaries of Quebec extended by 379,000 square miles to include the great James Bay hydroelectric power basin, which will mean ultimately so much to that province. Of course we have seen the industrial heartland of the nation, Ontario, have its boundary extended by 237,000 square miles to the north and to the boundary of Manitoba. We have seen Saskatchewan and Alberta each given an additional 250,000 square miles which were northern lands under the jurisdiction of Canada and belonging to all Canadians.

Simple justice would indicate that the only way the boundaries of our region can be extended is to include the extension of the land mass that lies underneath the sea to the continental shelf. It is the natural extension of our land mass, yet that simple justice is being denied us by this government.

Back in 1968 my party, under the leadership of the Hon. Robert Stanfield, the distinguished former premier of Nova Scotia, accepted as policy that the mineral rights of provinces on the continental shelf belonged to the coastal provinces. I am proud to say that one of the first things we did as a government under the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition and hon. member for Yellowhead was to implement that commitment made to the Atlantic provinces 12 years ago.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: I have referred to the case of the maritime provinces, which of course by definition excludes my own province of Newfoundland, but I believe a special case can be made for Newfoundland. That case has been made before at first ministers' meetings and in other forums.

When Newfoundland became a province of Canada in 1949, we entered confederation—notwithstanding the derogatory

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remarks of my friend, the hon. member for Burin-St. George's, with which he will have to live—as a self-governing dominion receiving our status under the same Statute of Westminster. We carried with us our sovereignty as a self-governing dominion, including jurisdiction over the continental shelf.

There are those, of course, who would argue that we were at the time a colony of Great Britain. That argument, of course, is legally and technically not correct. We were a self-governing dominion, albeit with our constitution voluntarily in suspension—that is, our legislative assembly—but it is interesting to note that five minutes before midnight on March 31, 1949, by letters patent the British government restored full self-governing status and full dominion status to Newfoundland so that we would carry into this nation our sovereignty intact, thereby ensuring that Newfoundland would carry with her these just claims which we now make.

We now know that the continental shelf of Newfoundland, particularly the area of the Grand Banks, contains vast amounts of natural gas and oil. We believe that as a province we must control the rate of development of this important energy resource in order to maximize the economic benefits to our province and, equally, to protect our vital and important fishery resource, which will continue to be the mainstay of our economy, and of course equally to protect our culture and our distinct society and distinct way of life from the economic pressures which would flow from such a development.

We believe that these tremendous oil and gas reserves will give us, for the first time in our history as a province of Canada, a chance to be equal, the same equality enjoyed by the other provinces, an opportunity to create our wealth, a chance to stand on our own feet and, above all, an opportunity to pay back to the nation the tremendous sums of money which have been paid out to us over the past 30 years in the form of equalization and regional development grants. All we ask is an opportunity to contribute to the wealth of the nation while at the same time improving our own economy and giving our people an opportunity to stand on their own feet.

In the words of the premier of our province, "We are an old and a proud people; all we need is an equal chance to prosper". We can have that equal chance if this government would only recognize what we feel is rightly ours, namely, our ownership of the resources of our vast continental shelf, the continental shelf which we brought into Canada when we became a partner in confederation in 1949.

Unfortunately, our claim to offshore oil and gas has been presented to the nation as a greedy and self-serving claim to something which is not rightfully ours. The fact is that if this government were to recognize that jurisdiction, we would not only be able to stand on our own feet economically but we would also be able to contribute substantially to the wealth of this nation by virtue of the tax revenues that the federal government would enjoy as a consequence of such a development and, of course, the royalties that would flow to the developing companies. We would not get it all, nor indeed would we want to get it all, but we do feel we are entitled to