

Atlantic Development Board Act

before the words "one hundred million dollars", namely the words "not less than". Section 16 (4) of the act would then read:

The total of all amounts that may be paid by the Minister of Finance to the board under subsection (1) and credited to the Atlantic development fund is not less than one hundred million dollars.

Mr. Pickersgill: Before the clause is put, sir, perhaps I might ask my hon. friend the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to say a word about it, because perhaps when he has said a word the hon. member may wonder whether it would be advisable to put his amendment.

Mr. Favreau: May I make the friendly and humble suggestion to the hon. member that in my respectful view the addition of the words "not less than" may not add to the clause, as such. While it might be clear in his mind, it might cause confusion in the minds of others. This is a clause the beginning of which would, if it were enacted as proposed by the Secretary of State, be permissive in nature and would contain at the end of it, not a provision, but words which would be no more permissive but would be mandatory in nature. It might lead to the impression that the governor in council might authorize by way of a blank cheque, without reference to parliament, more than \$100 million.

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): It seems to me that if a specific amount is named without qualifying words one way or the other, it will be assumed by future parliaments, officials and others that \$100 million is the amount, that it is final and absolute; that the Atlantic provinces have been paid off with \$100 million and that ends it. Up to now the Secretary of State has not said—I gave him full marks for this last evening—that this was a minimum amount. He said that he could not bind future parliaments, and I appreciate that point of view.

I would yield however to the greater knowledge of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in this matter; if it is going to lead to possible misunderstanding in a legal sense obviously it should not be proceeded with. That is my feeling, but at the same time I should like those within sound of my voice and who read the record to understand that hon. members from the Atlantic provinces here feel that this is a minimum amount. If circumstances should justify a certain recommendation by the Secretary of State to his government, or by a future minister, if there should be one, to any succeeding government, it is to be understood that it was on that basis that this bill was accepted.

Mr. Pickersgill: I think I can satisfy the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton and please

[Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton).]

myself a little in doing so. Putting in the words "not less than one hundred million dollars" would, in a strict literal sense, not mean a thing because there is obviously not less than \$100 million, because there is \$100 million. I know that sounds a little like "Alice in Wonderland" but it is logically correct none the less, as is much of "Alice in Wonderland". I can assure the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton and the other hon. members from the Atlantic provinces, and I can promise the other members from the rest of Canada, that if we can usefully spend this \$100 million quickly I will fight hard to get more.

Mr. Churchill: That does not mean a thing; you might not make your point.

Mr. Pickersgill: No, but it does refute the point made by the other hon. gentleman, and all other hon. gentlemen who objected to a fund at all. At least I have \$100 million, once this bill passes, that no austerity program next year, or the year after, or the year after that, can take away. This \$100 million will have been voted by parliament and will be available. We cannot have a change of heart next year, which might be possible if, for example, some other circumstance arose. Parliament will have decided that this \$100 million is for this purpose, and if it is used well and expeditiously, as I hope it will be, I do not think this parliament or any other parliament would dare refuse more as long as it was being used well to accomplish the purpose we have in mind. We have \$100 million, if the house sees fit to accept it now and, as I said, in my view it is a floor.

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): In view of the remarks of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration with respect to this amendment and its possible misunderstandings I propose to withdraw it.

The Deputy Chairman: Has the hon. member leave to withdraw his amendment?

Mr. Pickersgill: It is not needed; it was never moved.

Mr. MacLean (Queens): Mr. Chairman I just want to say a word to clarify the position of this party on the question of the fund. It has been argued by some hon. members that the act as it now stands, before amendment, is a sterile thing because it provides no money to be spent. This same argument could be used with regard to every department of government and almost every board that now exists.

There is no sterility about that whatsoever. All it means is that such a board has to come to parliament each year in the usual constitutional manner and have parliament agree to the expenditure of the money proposed in