

*Interim Supply*

wholesale business to handle them, which step by step are pushing the small independent retailer out of the way. What is the government doing about it?

The whole of the government's policy seems to be one of neglect and procrastination. They have apparently climbed into bed with big business so snugly that they are quite satisfied to have left the park bench to small business with a newspaper for a covering; they are satisfied to let things drift in the way they are going.

I think it is time a royal commission was set up to investigate this whole sorry mess and to expose these unfair practices and monopolistic tendencies which endanger our way of life.

**Mr. Bell:** Mr. Chairman, it was very interesting to hear the remarks of the hon. member of the C.C.F. party who has just resumed his seat. It would appear that the hon. member for Dauphin is on the side of the small businessman, and one could draw the conclusion from that that he has noted the return of the two-party system, and also the fact that there is a transformation in our midst which the hon. member for Moose Jaw-Lake Centre made last night. Or perhaps he is just worried about the folks back home, as most of us are at this time.

I want to refer to two or three remarks with respect to the power proposals that were made in the budget, proposals which have recently been clarified in this house.

This afternoon, the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings made an excellent speech bringing the matter up to date, and I think he set forth the position of the maritimes very clearly. First of all, I should like to refer to remarks contained in the *Fredericton Gleaner* of Thursday, April 4. That newspaper published a letter which was sent by the Prime Minister in reply to a letter which the premier of New Brunswick had sent to him requesting clarification of answers given in this house in reply to questions by the hon. member for Broadview and myself.

I do not refer to this in any critical way, so if I leave out some of the context it will be only because I wish to use this as the starting point of my theme. I can assure the house that these are the Prime Minister's words, contained in this letter in reply to the letter of Premier Flemming of February 26 of this year:

I can assure you that I had no intention of saying anything directly or by implication that could be taken to reflect unfavourably upon the good faith and initiative of your government. You will realize from the forms of the questions by Mr. Hees and Mr. Bell that I was called upon to answer that there was in their questions something more than implications reflecting unfavourably upon the good faith and initiative of our government.

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That is the end of that quotation from the Prime Minister's letter. I want to say that though I myself have often been critical of the lack of initiative shown by this government I would not wish to be associated with any great degree of criticism suggesting lack of good faith on the part of individuals and impugning their motives so far as assistance to the maritimes is concerned.

While we are on this point, since credit seems to be given to various quarters with regard to this assistance, I would like to refer to the fact that the New Brunswick government in its brief of January, 1956, offered as its second proposal a provision for thermal units provided a specific amount of federal assistance could be given to the province. Perhaps a quotation from this brief will explain this more clearly. The province in its second suggestion mentioned a figure and went on to say:

Federal financial assistance on this scale would be a major contribution to the growth of the Atlantic region and the Canadian economy as a whole. It is of great importance to note that the large thermal units which it is proposed to erect in New Brunswick could provide a substantial market for New Brunswick and Nova Scotia coal.

I mention this only to establish the fact that besides the Christie report and besides the other suggestions which have been made as to who originated this thermal unit scheme it was definitely a suggestion of the province of New Brunswick.

I wish to refer also to certain references to low cost power which have been made so far in respect to this proposal. When the original announcement was made in this house I described the proposal as nebulous, and this seemed to cause some consternation to some hon. members, particularly to the hon. member for Gloucester. If the hon. member knew the meaning of that word, or would take time to look it up in the dictionary he would find it means "hazy and vague", and I still suggest that description is valid in spite of the clarification which was made the other day by the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources. There are still aspects of this proposal which are hazy and vague, aspects which are nebulous and I refer particularly tonight to the fact that we have no idea what kind of low cost power is going to be provided by these units.

**Mr. Robichaud:** Would the hon. member permit a question? Has he read the correspondence tabled by the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources the day before yesterday? If he reads that letter from the chief engineer of the New Brunswick power commission I think he will find a reply to what he is suggesting now.