

Statement on Minas Basin Project

how big those tides are, Mr. Speaker? I wish Mr. Speaker rather his deputy were in the chair because—

Some hon. Members: Shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bécharde): Order, please. I do not want to prevent the hon. member making a very interesting and long speech, but it is the practice of this House that statements and comments thereon are to be short.

Mr. Nowlan: I apologize. I was not referring in any personal way to the Speaker but I should like to compare the potential created by tides that ebb and flow four times a day. Five days of the normal flow on the St. Lawrence at Cornwall would produce the same volume of water. That is the type of thing we are talking about today. I appreciate we are supposed to be short in our statements, and there are many other things I would deal with; but there will be many speeches made on the report.

As I say, the report stresses the negative. It does not refer to the billions of kilowatts of untapped energy that is going to waste. It does not stress the positive elements, such as the renewable resources. These are resources that are pollution free. While this energy potential may cost a lot to develop, once developed it is a fixed asset. Capital will have been expended, and in this way it will be a relatively inflation free resource. It will also be a source of foreign exchange because we will be able to sell this power to the northeast United States which is crying out for it. Judging from some of the articles I have been reading lately, if we do not start developing some of the power potential in Canada, then somebody will spend some money somewhere at rates of interest that the board have said are too high.

Most important of all, the report does not mention the fact that this development could be the base for a real, viable program to combat economic disparity. Not only would we build new plants, but this development would mean higher income for the people and increased tax flow back to the treasury to help offset the cost. For the first time ever, the Atlantic area would be able to pay in a plus way into the national purse rather than always being at the receiving end.

I have read the most important proposal which should be considered positively. But for the high interest rates, this tidal output would be competitive with other energy sources; the board says so at page 21 of the

[Mr. Nowlan.]

report. However, the board and the minister stop there, even though it is suggested that further construction or further generating capacity might make the project competitive and viable in the future.

I hope that this minister and the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) will undertake to do some research into different types of power plant construction and into how you can reduce cost with new generating equipment. I suggest this question requires continuing consideration and perhaps it could be referred not only to a committee of this House but to a government committee with perhaps New Brunswick and Nova Scotia as members. This question is too large for one provincial government to handle on its own. We should look at the matter positively and see how best to tackle the many problems.

If there is anything that I have learned in my political life, especially from listening to my friends to the left, and one of them in particular who I will not name, it is that if you do not look at projects positively so you can avoid the hurdles, then you will never make progress. Instead of saying: "This is a good idea but we won't be able to do it", let us say we should do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bécharde): Order, please. The hon. member will understand that there are other hon. members who want to comment this afternoon.

Mr. Nowlan: I apologize. In conclusion—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nowlan: —what concerns me most about the report is the positive-negative-pessimistic aspects of it, which the minister himself seems to have adopted in the brief time that he has had to look at it—though I do not know how long he has had. Instead of saying that it is a good project but that we cannot implement it, we should say that it is vital and necessary to implement it and ask ourselves how we go about solving some of the problems.

I have taken some time here this afternoon, in spite of some of the catcalls to the left of me that show that some members do not care about development of the east. The board that studied this matter did so at a cost of \$2.5 million. We spent almost \$2 million on the royal commission on the status of women. We spent \$7 million odd on the bilingualism commission. All of these matters may be important. I do not know if the commission