

Atlantic Development Board Act

sible to parliament for this bill is not in the position where he would like to make an opening statement on second reading?

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Secretary of State): The answer, sir, is no. I was advised by hon. gentlemen opposite that I spoke too much on the resolution. Therefore it seems unnecessary for me to repeat on second reading of the bill what has already been said.

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, as the Secretary of State does not appear anxious—in fact he does not even appear willing—to make a statement on second reading, I might say I can quite understand his reluctance to speak because it involves the question of the principle of the amendment. The principle involved in the bill is to amend the act which was passed last autumn by a previous parliament. There is no reason for amending it; consequently I can understand the minister's reluctance to defend it in any way, shape or form. However, as he has decided that he does not wish to speak at this time, there are a few observations which I should like to make.

I should like first of all to call the attention of the house to the fact that there is an amendment before us, and I believe we should think of the original act which was passed last autumn, as well as the amendment, when making the observations which we will make on second reading of Bill No. C-80. I think we have to go back to the original act which it is proposed to amend by Bill No. C-80 and ask ourselves this question. Did we or did we not agree with the principle of the setting up of the Atlantic development board? If we did, I think we should keep that fact in mind as we speak to this bill at the present time. I expressed my opinion at the resolution stage of the bill, but having now seen and read the bill I cannot agree with the principle that a bill which amends an act which has never yet had an opportunity to function is a proper bill. I cannot accept that principle, and I do not think this house should accept such a principle.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton): This is the case with the Atlantic provinces development board, and it is my opinion that these amendments are made for political reasons and political reasons only. The word which has come out of the province of New Brunswick is, I believe, "Wardell must go".

Now what do we ask ourselves when we are discussing the whole principle? Do we not ask ourselves the question, are we anxious to do in this House of Commons the things

which will benefit the Atlantic provinces? To my certain knowledge this was the approach of the previous government, and I hope it was the approach of the present government to the same problem. The measure was designed originally to be an instrument which would lead to progress and development in the Atlantic provinces, and I have no reason to doubt it would have fulfilled that general intention had it been allowed to function. Has anyone ever proven that the original bill would not have led to the progress and development of the Atlantic provinces? I submit no one has done so.

There are certain aspects of the amendment which we cannot possibly accept. The hon. member for Antigonish-Guysborough in his remarks on the resolution said that promises made during the election campaign rendered a change imperative. I do not agree that this is a good enough reason for taking the action now contemplated. If the hon. member made some promise that he is perhaps ashamed of now, there is no reason why he should not acknowledge what has taken place instead of trying to inflict this amended act on the people of the Atlantic provinces. He says he promised certain things during the election—a better break for the Atlantic provinces, as I recall his words. In particular he spoke of providing a stronger Atlantic development board with a capital fund to promote basic development projects, to encourage the expansion of industry and to provide jobs and income.

I submit there is nothing there which was not contained in the original measure. Hon. members opposite have argued that there was not a specified amount of money at the disposal of the board. I said a few weeks ago when this measure was before the house, and I repeat this afternoon, that all the resources of Canada were at the disposal of the Atlantic development board. It was only a matter of determining what was economic, what was justified, what would lead to the development of this part of our great country. At that time the entire resources of all Canada were at the board's disposal. It is all poppycock to say there were no funds at the disposal of this board as it was originally conceived.

The hon. member for Antigonish-Guysborough said also that there had been a decision from the supreme court of public opinion in the Atlantic provinces. I asked him at that point whether he had promised his constituents that the board would die on January 24, 1969. He replied by saying it was a good thing to have a date on which the board would die because it would then have an objective for performance. I think that is a reasonable paraphrase of what the hon. member said; I assume it is, because he is not disputing it. He told us that individual

[Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton).]