

Atlantic Development Board Act

original bill through the house. There are some things in life we look back on with more satisfaction than others, and this was one in my life. When the bill was first introduced there was some discussion on the question of funds for the Atlantic Development Board. It was felt by the government of that day that funds should not in any way be restricted. Now the minister says that the amount voted at that time has been a limiting factor, but I can assure the house that it was not considered such by our government.

The provision of this additional \$50 million seems reasonable to me. Perhaps I am too modest in my idea of expenditures. Some people want to talk in billions of dollars but, in the school in which I was brought up, when we went into debt for \$1,000 we worried about where the money would come from to settle the debt.

I am quite prepared to take the minister's word that when these funds have been exhausted consideration will be given to the provision of additional moneys. I think the original legislation has provided much benefit to the Atlantic provinces and again I express my admiration for the work of Dr. Weeks and his staff. The house should also give appreciation to the former government which introduced the original legislation and also to the present government for introducing this bill which will further the work of the Atlantic Development Board.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, the members of this party are wholeheartedly in support of this legislation in so far as it will contribute to the economic development of the Atlantic provinces. I am not going to take very much of the time of the house because I think there is general support for this measure. If I have any criticism at all to offer, it would be that neither the legislation nor the amount of money envisaged goes far enough.

When the resolution was being presented by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) he assured the house that the Atlantic Development Board had not been imprudent in respect of either the money it had spent or the commitments it had made. If I had any criticism at all of the board it would be that they had been so careful that after three years only half the \$100 million was spent and the rest committed. It seems to me this is not a very large expenditure over a three year period to take care of the industrial

needs of the four Atlantic provinces and to provide the kind of stimulus needed for the economic growth of that area.

I think the amount of money provided now is too small. I agree with the minister that from time to time the house should have an opportunity to have a report and debate on this matter, but there are other ways by which this could be provided. I do not like the idea of handing out this money in little dribblets so that the board constantly is hampered in its long-term planning of what it wants to do. I should like to say that I think this is a good board. I believe they have gathered around them an excellent staff and that their long-term planning and projects offer great promise. But I think they ought to be given a great deal more money and ought to be given by the minister and the government the green light in getting down to the business which needs to be done.

I need not remind the house that the Atlantic provinces have much reason to complain that the disparity of income which has existed in days gone by is not being rectified. The gap in per capita income and in productivity between the Atlantic provinces and the other parts of Canada, particularly central Canada, is being narrowed; but the much greater unemployment figures in the Atlantic provinces compared with those for the rest of Canada are not being reduced substantially. Even if the Atlantic provinces make gains, which they are making, I suggest that they are not making gains as fast as the other parts of Canada. The Atlantic provinces are in much the same position as was the case when the queen said to Alice in Wonderland: You have to run as fast as you can to stay where you are.

Even if we could step up economic and industrial activity in the Atlantic provinces they would then only be holding their own with the rest of Canada and still not be reducing the very considerable disparity which exists between them and the rest of Canada. Therefore I feel that this government and this parliament can afford to be generous and far-seeing in making very much larger sums of money available to the Atlantic Development Board. After all, this involves four provinces. Three at least, leaving out Newfoundland, do not have great hinterlands yet to be developed which is the case in Quebec, Ontario, the prairie provinces and British Columbia. They do not have the hinterland of natural resources from which they can draw in the future. They will have to depend on intensive industrial development

[Mr. Flemming.]