

*Trade with Caribbean Federation*

happens I act in a consultant capacity for a small project which might be termed as commercial external aid. It is sponsored by a number of Canadian companies which operate in the West Indies and which feel their responsibility to the area is so great that they should put some of their money into a program to help this very area to which the resolution refers, that is, the Windward and Leeward islands. Thus I have an intimate experience in each of the islands referred to in this group, as well as experience in a wider sense with the entire West Indies area.

I believe we in Canada have a particular responsibility to do more than we are presently doing to assist these smaller territories in their multitude of problems. Few of us in Canada realize just what historic connection and background there is for us there. I have been interested in English Harbour on the island of Antigua and the ruins, now partially restored, of the Nelson dockyard. It was here Nelson based the administrative headquarters of the West Indies fleet and he sailed from this harbour when he left the area of the West Indies to take part in the battle of Trafalgar. I must commend the few Canadians and the larger number of West Indians who have taken the initiative in restoring this historic place. But this is only one example of the many interesting aspects of these islands; and if for no other reason than making them the natural refuge of Canadians seeking relief from the rigours of our northern climate, this area certainly has tremendous value.

The hon. member for Queens (Mr. Macquarrie) has just spoken about provincial status for the West Indies, for the proposed eastern Caribbean federation. I think this is a very worthy goal to which we may look at some time in the future. It involves, of course, most specifically the attitude of the people who inhabit these territories and it is my impression that this is not what they are looking for at the present time. The West Indies federation has collapsed, and with the lack of concern or active interest on the part of the colonial office toward these areas at the present time I think they are looking hopefully first of all to the development of their own federation. In fact if it were not for the critical situation which presently exists in British Guiana no doubt they would be much further along in their negotiations at the present time.

I agree entirely with the suggestion that free trade should first be established between Canada and these areas. I wonder why the hon. member for Queens (Mr. Macquarrie) did not include in his statement Trinidad, Tobago and Jamaica. While these independent countries have now made much more progress than the eastern Caribbean area, they are certainly a part of the larger picture of the West Indies, particularly that which is part of the commonwealth, though it also includes, of course, the French territories as well. I believe it would be an excellent step forward, something worth while and beneficial, if the government would consider the basis of this resolution and begin negotiations, with the intention of developing a free trade area or, at least, an area of much freer trade.

Many might ask: What is there in this Caribbean area other than tourism and sugar? From a trade aspect there is a tremendous opportunity for markets for many of the things we are so well equipped to supply. This applies to housing in particular. One of the greatest needs in each of these territories is housing. A few of the islands have large timber supplies available; others have none at all. Whether it is to utilize the raw materials available in the area and develop them for use in housing or whether it is to supply housing from this country, here is one of the greatest opportunities that we have. This includes industrial development; it even includes certain basic food items. I have assisted in the last few months in setting up one of the first milk reconstitution stations in the Leeward group, and there is a second one which has recently come into production. Milk is urgently needed in each of the territories. We have large supplies of milk powder and there is no reason why we should not be moving to assist these people in their efforts to provide adequate food supplies for their population.

I do not intend to prolong this debate but I should like to mention several other points, particularly one which has been referred to already. It relates to the positive side of things. The Leeward and Windward group definitely are within the British commonwealth. Here is an opportunity for us to show that we have not forgotten all that the British commonwealth represents to us, not only as far as the privilege and heritage we have is concerned but also as far as the responsibility we have to those members, and parts of it,