

The Address—Mr. H. J. Flemming

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that if the hon. member considers that a per capita of \$1,700 constitutes a grievance, then we in the Atlantic provinces have a much greater grievance than those in the locality he mentioned, the province of Quebec. For instance, in the province of New Brunswick our average income is about two thirds of the national average. In Nova Scotia it is slightly better, and I believe it is slightly less in the other Atlantic provinces. In the province of New Brunswick a very large percentage of people speak the French language as their first language, but we do not hear anything about separatism down there. We have a low per capita income as compared with the national average, but no complaints are made about it except at dominion-provincial conferences, where it is brought very forcefully to the attention of the federal authorities. I have a little knowledge about that. We have not mentioned the question of separatism, even though it might be argued that economically confederation has not improved our lot. In brief, Mr. Speaker, we in the Atlantic provinces have put our hand to the plow. We have seen our country grow in population, in production, in influence, in prestige, in respect since confederation became a reality. While we may not have shared to the extent we would have liked, I say to you now that the question cannot possibly be, "Do we wish to turn back?" The decision must be that we will go ahead. We must contribute to the objective of progress, and in my opinion we must do it under the umbrella of a united Canada and the concept of "One for all and all for one".

It would appear to me, Mr. Speaker, that the frequent conferences held between the federal government and the provinces since the present government assumed office have had the effect of indicating to the provincial premiers and their advisers that their advice and opinions have much weight with the government here in Ottawa, apparently more weight than that of elected members to this house, including those supporting the government from the respective provinces. I am sure others have gained that impression. It would seem to me that if this is an appropriate opinion and one which is justified by the facts, every member of this house must of necessity consider that he is here for the purpose of contributing to the growth of a great country, Canada, in the federal field and at the federal level, and that he owes his first allegiance to a strong central government rather than to the province from which he comes. This concept would put the well-being of the nation ahead of the well-being of any part of the nation, based on the principle,

of course, of equality of opportunity as enunciated on many occasions and at all times ever since he assumed office by the leader of the Conservative party who sits in this chamber. So I say to everyone within the sound of my voice this afternoon that we in this parliament should be Canadians first, with provincial and constituency representatives being a secondary responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to refer to what is presently contemplated in New Brunswick by the New Brunswick electric power commission, with apparently the blessing of the New Brunswick government. I refer to the so-called Mactaquac dam, 14 miles above Fredericton on the Saint John river, to which the Atlantic development board have made a grant of \$20 million which they justify, I believe, on the ground that it will contribute to low cost power and will subsequently attract industry to our province. When this project is carried out it will cause a lake to be created which will be 55 miles long and of substantial width. It will completely replace the Saint John river as we know it, from Mactaquac near Fredericton to some distance above Woodstock in my county of Carleton. It will flood many cemeteries and churches; it will destroy many landmarks; it will completely flood out many islands and fertile interval land. Many knowledgeable people consider it will destroy the salmon fishing on the Saint John and Tobique rivers. It will be the most pronounced physical change to have occurred in New Brunswick in recorded history.

The reason and excuse given for going ahead with this revolutionary project, which will give the Saint John river such drastic alteration, is cheap power and progress. I want to refer to this argument, but before doing so I say that I yield to no one in my desire and urge for progress, and recognition of the fact that we must have progress. I fully realize that we cannot, and must not, stand still. I do, however, want to know if we must decide between progress on the one hand and the ruination of the Saint John river valley, as we know it, on the other. I do not believe this matter has received enough careful investigation. I want to bring to the attention of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) in his capacity of answering to parliament for the Atlantic development board, this situation so that it may receive the attention which I believe he will realize it deserves.

One might ask the question, "Are there any alternative sources of supply of power at approximately the same price?" I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Passamaquoddy development bill before the congress of the