

*Atlantic Development Board Act*

parts of the chamber. So far as the principle of this measure is concerned, I am sure that not only is there no objection to it but that it has universal support throughout the house.

I would be the first to say that when the Atlantic Development Board was established it was impossible to foresee all the eventualities which might arise, and it is the most natural thing in the world that the minister should now be submitting for the approval of the house a bill which I am sure is designed to achieve more directly and more quickly the aims and objects of the original legislation.

I listened to the brief remarks of the hon. member for Queens (Mr. MacLean). I believe everything he said had a tremendous amount of merit. I have some personal knowledge of the subject of his proposal since the business with which I am associated is conducted largely with the United Kingdom and the New England states of the United States of America. It has always been my feeling that we in the Atlantic provinces have laid rather too much emphasis on our disabilities instead of emphasizing and exploiting our natural advantages as perhaps we should have done.

It is with this in mind that I make these few remarks this afternoon. It seems to me, in the light of the importance of the balance of payments situation, that any industry which is based primarily on the exportation of goods should occupy a special place in the hearts and minds of those who have some public responsibility. I am sure the minister is very conscious of this. Then again, special encouragement should also be given to industries, whether developed in the Atlantic provinces or elsewhere in this nation, whose products might be substituted for material which would otherwise have to be imported.

So far as exports to the United Kingdom are concerned I believe there are many types of activity in the Atlantic provinces which are capable of further development. For example, in one of the counties which I have the honour to represent we have, I believe, the largest food processing plant in Canada. Those who are conducting that business tell me that generally speaking their market is confined to a large extent to exportation to Britain in spite of the fact that they are dealing with a commodity which one might think would be difficult to process and then to export due to its perishable nature. Yet this is being done.

These men, who incidentally deserve tremendous credit for the development of this

industry, are instruments by which many hundreds of thousands of dollars are being distributed by way of wages in our part of the world. The fact that they have built up by their own efforts a market for the products of the farms in the counties I represent has had a tremendous effect on the economy of those counties.

• (3:40 p.m.)

The activities of the board should not be restricted to acting upon the recommendations of provincial governments. Yesterday we heard one hon. member, a former member of the board, speak of the approach taken by it to regional problems. I make no apology for being guided to some extent by political considerations. There would be something wrong with all of us if we were not so guided, but I do not see any reason why political considerations should conflict with public interest. I think the board should be willing to receive suggestions from members of parliament at the federal level and even from Conservative members of parliament.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** It has been.

**Mr. Flemming:** I agree with the minister that it has been, and I also agree with those hon. members who spoke yesterday about the general excellence of the members of the board and its staff under its director, Dr. Weeks. They are capable people dedicated to making a success of the work entrusted to them.

I think these amendments will improve the general situation and, as I said at the outset, I feel we in the Atlantic provinces should emphasize our advantages rather than our disadvantages and handicaps. Our export drive should not be confined to the United Kingdom. Goods from the Atlantic region can be sold in all the markets of the world, as several firms have already demonstrated. Their products have been satisfactory in quality and competitive in price.

The general level of productivity in the Atlantic provinces on a per capita basis compares favourably with the rest of Canada, and I am hopeful that greater initiative will follow the passage of this legislation. We are not proud that unemployment in our region is higher than in the rest of the nation, and I believe that greater emphasis on exports could be a factor in helping to reduce it.

I have some knowledge of the board right from its establishment. I am grateful to my leader, who is in the chamber this afternoon, for the responsibility he gave me to guide the