

Atlantic Development Board

for the basic economy of the area. They committed themselves to the decentralization of industry, and they assured the electors of larger defence contracts and the establishment of new crown corporations in the Atlantic provinces.

What have they done to meet these commitments and fulfil their obligations in the last five and a half years? Is this new Atlantic development board now being established to distract public attention from the mismanagement of public affairs by this government? I repeat what I said earlier. How can such a board be effective, how can it operate and play an active role in the economic development of the area, unless it provides the kind of leadership offered from a national government in all other industrialized nations to deal with our problems on a broader basis?

Most of the economic ills of the Atlantic region can be traced to a slower rate of investment than elsewhere in Canada. The Minister of National Revenue admitted this in his speech this afternoon. APEC, in its proposals to the royal commission on banking and finance, made two specific recommendations which deserve to be considered at this time. First, APEC recommended the establishment of a capital projects commission for the area. It would provide over a reasonably short period the facilities needed for further development and co-ordination of all capital spending and subsidies in the region, except those that are national in scope.

Second, it recommended the creation of a federal fund to make grants in the Atlantic provinces to help them set up cornerstone plants, those that have considerable future and a direct and indirect impact on an area's economy, as well as industrial estates or other establishments. The council recognizes that a development board will be almost useless unless it is assisted by a long run flow of funds into regional investment. The type of assistance that is now provided by the industrial development bank or other lending agencies is most inadequate, mainly on account of its short terms and excessive rates of interest.

This new board should lose no time in making a complete examination of our trade possibilities with the British Caribbean. Such islands as Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago, the Bahamas and the Leeward and Windward islands are in the geographical proximity of year round maritime ports such as Halifax and Saint John, and the Canadian and Caribbean economies are complementary. The advantages of opportunities offered for trade exchanges with the Caribbean should be looked into by the Atlantic development board, and no effort should be spared to facilitate

such possibilities. This government is well known for appointing boards and royal commissions.

I notice, Mr. Chairman, that my time has practically expired and in concluding my remarks I would urge the government to consider the immediate establishment of a capital assistance fund agency to work in co-operation and conjunction with this proposed Atlantic development board. It is said that Mrs. Marx observed at the end of a long and rather bleak life, "How much better it would have been if dear Karl had made some capital instead of writing and speaking about it". I wish to say to this government now, on the eve of its last days in office, how much better it would be for them if they were prepared to provide the Atlantic economy with proper capital instead of more boards, more commissions, more promises and more words.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether I could ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Robichaud: Certainly.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): Will the hon. member tell the house why the Liberals did nothing for the maritimes during their 22 years of administration?

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Chairman, I think this is the type of question we may expect from the hon. member.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): Well, answer it.

Mr. Robichaud: Any projects of major importance which have been completed in the Atlantic provinces have been completed by a Liberal government.

An hon. Member: Name one.

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member says, "Name one". I will name camp Gagetown, which I would say can be compared to any major industries in New Brunswick. I would mention the Canso causeway. Also, the few crown corporations which we now have in the Atlantic provinces were instituted by a Liberal administration, and nothing of the kind has been done since 1957.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Chairman, it a real privilege for me as a westerner to associate myself this afternoon with the people who live in the Atlantic area of our great country. As I have come to know many of them as my personal friends and to know that part of the country almost as well as I know the other parts of Canada, I have come to have a deep feeling of affection and appreciation for the maritime people from our four Atlantic provinces. One of the great heritages