

*Atlantic Development Board Act*

part of the government to fulfil to the letter statements and commitments which were ill-considered and made at random during an election campaign. I think this is the reason for this proposal, rather than the government thinking it is in the best interests of the area concerned.

The party which is now in power made the commitment to set up a special fund; but it does not follow that this is good practice or that it is beneficial to the Atlantic provinces. There is some slight assurance in the statement of the Secretary of State that this amount will be the floor. I think it is difficult for us at this time to look into the future far enough to see the amount of money which may be necessary; this will depend upon the activity of the board and the recommendations they make to the government. But I do think this is a bad principle. If we pass this legislation we are, in effect, voting en bloc \$100 million to be administered by a board which is not directly responsible to parliament. This is a new precedent which I think is very unfortunate. After all, one of the basic principles of parliamentary government is that parliament shall have complete control over the voting of public money to be used for public projects. In this connection it has been said, of course, that when the board makes recommendations they will be considered by treasury board; but treasury board is only a committee of the government, and the government is not parliament. It is one of the sacred rights of parliament to carefully scrutinize the voting of supply to the government. I regret this departure from our rights. In effect we are at the present time, if we pass this legislation, voting en bloc \$100 million as a minimum for purposes with regard to which we have only a vague conception at the present time. We do not know upon what projects or undertakings the money is to be spent.

I should like to ask the Secretary of State a question regarding this matter. Will the provisions of the Financial Administration Act apply to moneys spent by the board out of this \$100 million fund? In other words, if the board is engaged in some activity which requires the letting of contracts and this sort of thing—perhaps construction—will the manner in which this money is spent be in complete accord with the provisions of the Financial Administration Act, in the same way as would be the case with regard to money spent by a department of government? I would like to be assured in regard to this matter.

Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to delay the committee any longer at the present time. However, I see that the Secretary of State has resumed his seat. I knew it was necessary

[Mr. MacLean (Queens).]

for him to leave the chamber for a few moments, and therefore I delayed asking this question. I would ask the Secretary of State to clarify a statement he made last evening when closing the debate on second reading. I want to be fair to the hon. gentleman; he may have said something that did not truly reflect what was in his mind. As reported at page 2014 of *Hansard*, he said this:

I suggest that, for the rest of the consideration of this bill, we forget whether the previous government, which made a good start in this matter, should get the credit, or whether it should be the present government, which is trying to carry out to the letter what we promised the electors to do, for which we elected 20 members out of 33 members in the Atlantic provinces in the last election.

Then he went on:

Surely if there is to be good faith in public life at all, when you give undertakings to people and they vote for you, you should carry out those undertakings.

Surely, Mr. Chairman, the Secretary of State does not imply there that the corollary is also true, that if people do not vote for a party and it is elected to power, they have no obligation to carry out the commitments made. I would like to be assured that the Secretary of State recognizes that if a party is elected, it forms a government for all the people and is responsible to the people who voted against it as well as to those who voted for it. Under the present circumstances, of course, those who did not vote for the present government form a majority of the Canadian people. I am glad to see that the Secretary of State, who is an adopted son of the Atlantic provinces—

Mr. Bell: Orphan.

Mr. MacLean (Queens): —appears to recognize the special needs of the maritime provinces, and I would hate to think that the maritime provinces will receive their just rewards only if they knuckle under and guess right as to what government will be next elected to power.

Mr. Pickersgill: I should like to clear up that point right away. I think the hon. gentleman has convicted me of using the language very loosely. I am glad he brought the matter up, because when I was looking at the *Hansard* record of what I said last night, before I went home, it crossed my mind that this was, to put it mildly, ambiguous. Certainly it was sloppy. What I meant to say was that when a political party gives certain undertakings and, as a result, gets into office, it should carry out those undertakings. That is all I meant, and I think the language, in the loose way we speak colloquially, is capable of bearing that interpretation. However, I admit it is also capable of the interpretation which the hon. member put upon it.