

*The Address—Mr. Balcom*

region. I mention it here because it reinforces a conviction which has been growing in my mind for some time, a conviction that the federal government might have an agency whose primary and principal interest would be the regional problems of the Atlantic provinces. Spokesmen for other areas where a similar need may exist can present their own cases much better than I.

Four years ago, during my first session in the house, I tabled a question concerning the St. Lawrence seaway and its probable economic effects, with particular reference to the industries of the maritimes. The information or answers were not available at that time, and I understood why they could not be supplied. Doubtless it is much easier to give information on a definite engineering project than on the economic aspects of such an undertaking. Perhaps even 25 years from now conclusive answers on some of its results will still be lacking, but that does not say we should not be looking for them now and doing it with all the talent and energy we can muster. An informed policy can then be developed and corrective action taken before it is too late.

In the past, when general conditions or particular problems reached a critical stage, royal commissions have been appointed. At other times interdepartmental committees or interested persons have concerned themselves with regional problems. But these have been lacking in continuity. Their usefulness in solving or anticipating problems has been minimized by their transitory nature. It is my conviction that the federal government ought to make provision for a development unit in the Atlantic region either through the Bank of Canada or the industrial development bank, or as a joint operation of the two. The unit should be located in the area and staffed by people who have a continuing interest in the development of these provinces. The Bank of Canada's research department has an enviable reputation. Undoubtedly it has regional specialists who have a real understanding of area problems. The industrial development bank has industry specialists. I suggest that the government make provision for the systematic use of these facilities for regional development.

One immediate purpose that can be served is the provision of research facilities to provide some of the answers for the Atlantic provinces economic council. Such services would be a very useful complement to the promotional work of the Atlantic provinces economic council and of provincial departments concerned with industry and tourist development.

[Mr. Balcom.]

Second, and most important in the long-term, the constant scrutiny of national policies and programs from the point of view of their regional consequences is becoming increasingly necessary. The growing disparity among the provinces is painfully apparent, but the causes and the desirable remedies are not so easily seen. The problem of freight rates, to mention only one, is staggering in its complexity and magnitude. To those who think this would be just another expensive federal bureau I suggest that they examine the costs of the many royal commissions that have been appointed, and the results achieved. A report is filed, then the valuable experience and knowledge built up in the course of the inquiry are dispersed to the far parts of the country and forgotten.

I should like to refer now to the matter of immigration, which has also concerned me for some time. Being of the opinion that Canada's absorptive capacity in this regard is not as great as many people suppose, I would urge upon the government a cautious policy as to numbers, and certainly a highly selective one. I realize that such a stand leaves one open to charges of selfishness and lack of concern for people living under less favourable conditions than our own. But before anyone becomes too righteously indignant let him ask himself whether he would urge large-scale immigration from countries where population pressure is the greatest, the Far East, for example, where language, customs, religion and standard of living are very different from our own.

The arguments on this subject are varied. Those who favour large-scale immigration usually argue that more people mean a larger labour force and a larger market. But when unemployment befalls large numbers of the new workers the only place they can turn for help is the government. Yet the government is frequently assailed by these same proponents of large-scale immigration for the ever-increasing expenditures on welfare.

There is very strong argument, too, that it ill behoves a country of Canada's size and population to deny entry to those seeking a better life in the new world. Let me assure you that I do not deny the validity of this contention. In the present state of the world some movement of people is necessary and some immigration to Canada is desirable. I do not pretend to know how much nor do I know the answers to all the questions involved, but certain important things should be considered.

First, it must be remembered that Canada is not a homogeneous unit with a long history of strong attachment to a single national