

*Atlantic Development Board*

**Mr. Robichaud:** No; my time is limited. I will be pleased to have the answer, but government members must know that my time is limited.

I have another question to ask of the minister. What assurance do we have now from the government that this government is prepared to adopt new policies which will tend to eliminate this lag in the economic development of the Atlantic region? The Atlantic development board should have not only a passive role but it should be empowered to act positively, to be free to initiate studies and make recommendations on its own. In order to be effective we must also have in Ottawa a government prepared to listen to the board's recommendations and act accordingly. Unless the government is prepared to help industries adapted to the region and having a reasonable prospect of success, such a board will be a waste of effort, time and energy.

The field of action of this new board is almost unlimited. In its report the Gordon commission recommended a policy of considerable expenditure of capital or the opening up of facilities designed to encourage the development of the resources of the Atlantic region, including such problems as adequate cheap power and transportation services, which have been mentioned by the minister in the course of his remarks. Thorough economic planning for the area is a must if the Atlantic region is to share equally in national economic development of our country.

I now ask, Mr. Chairman, how can such a board be effective unless it is associated with a capital assistance fund administered by special agencies of the federal government to be concerned with basic projects for promoting the over-all economic prosperity of the Atlantic region.

We all know that the federal government did not hesitate to proceed with the St. Lawrence seaway and with the trans-Canada pipe line. The present government was not unduly concerned with the economic soundness of the South Saskatchewan dam, and it did not hesitate to invest in this particular project hundreds of millions of dollars of the taxpayers' money. So I ask, why so much concern by the Prime Minister and by the ex-minister of public works over the economic soundness of the Chignecto canal? Why is the present government, after refusing openly and squarely to consider this major project, intending to use this Atlantic development board as, I could almost say, another scapegoat in order to distract attention from its delayed action?

[Mr. Fleming (Victoria-Carleton).]

The government seems at times to be quite concerned, quite embarrassed and even uneasy about our unfavourable balance of trade with foreign countries, I ask, Mr. Chairman, how much thought is being directed toward the Atlantic region's balance of payments in respect of the rest of Canada. What about our unfavourable balance of trade with central Canada and with the prairie provinces? We have reason for complaint. We have reason to be concerned, and I intend to use this as an example. A car manufacturer in central Canada shipping his automobiles and trucks by rail to Saint John, New Brunswick, uses transportation companies from Ontario to transport his cars and trucks from Saint John to the respective distribution centres in the province of New Brunswick.

While the Atlantic region offers a golden opportunity for products from central Canada and the prairie provinces, we have to depend almost entirely on export for the disposal of our own primary and industrial products. While industries in central Canada are protected by tariff walls we, in the provinces near the ocean, have to pay and pay highly for such protection in addition to prohibitive transportation costs. We are not seeking hand-outs. We are only fighting for our rights, our rights and justice as promised and assured us when we joined confederation. Canada is one of the few countries in the free world where the retarded regions have not received special recognition, where special measures have not been enacted to take care of emergency local or regional conditions. The United Kingdom, Belgium, Norway and Germany all had to face similar situations; all had chronically depressed areas. These countries have seen fit to cope with the situation. They have taken the necessary steps to introduce powerful and dynamic programs which met in a bold manner the needs of such areas. The two basic remedies offered by these countries have been, first, the provision of capital on easy terms, which obviously does not exist in Canada, particularly in the Atlantic region; second, special tax concessions for new industries established in depressed areas.

In June of 1957, prior to the general election, every Progressive Conservative candidate in the maritimes endorsed in no uncertain terms what was called their Atlantic resolutions. They endorsed a resolution to the effect that a national resources development program should be instituted permitting federal assistance in the Atlantic provinces for the purpose of developing our resources for the maximum benefit of the Atlantic economy. They favoured the institution of a capital projects program to provide capital assistance