

Atlantic Provinces Power Development

Island, namely the continual move away from the farms. In the last generation there has been a 28 per cent decline in the number of farms occupied and in operation in our province which is almost purely an agricultural province. It would help to encourage new industry and thus by increasing the population of our province it would broaden the revenue base of our economy which is now perhaps more narrowly restricted than that of any other of the ten provinces in this country.

The details, of course, could be worked out in co-operation with the two governments; but it seems to me that we might in Prince Edward Island, as Premier Matheson mentioned, have certain thermal plants developed in our province. My colleague the hon. member for Kings (Mr. Macdonald) the other day mentioned the prospect of developing plants at such points as Georgetown, by moving coal by barge across from Nova Scotia. These plants could conceivably be developed in other parts of the coastal areas of Prince Edward Island. Possible also would be the building of transmission cables. Premier Matheson mentions that there may not be an immediate prospect of the building of a causeway. If it does not come immediately, I hope it will come soon. But meanwhile possibly a submarine cable could be constructed to bring to our province the power generated and developed in the mainland areas.

A careful study of this should be commenced immediately, as the distance across the Northumberland strait is very short. In any case, whatever plan is developed or if there should be a combination of both, I hope it goes forward and that Prince Edward Island participates to the full extent of its capacity, because we need more power and that power will be a great boon and blessing to our people.

I may say that we are thinking not only of what will help Prince Edward Island. We welcome the development of our neighbouring provinces. What benefits them is good for us; a large population in the maritime provinces means better and larger markets for us, and Prince Edward Island is, as all hon. members know, an area where the finest agricultural products obtainable are produced. An increase in the rate of development of industrial life in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick would certainly benefit us by providing a greater purchasing market there.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, I support this measure enthusiastically, with the conviction that this bill introduced by the minister marks a turn-

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

ing point in the history of my long-neglected province and of the whole Atlantic area.

Hon. Jean Lesage (Montmagny-L'Islet): Mr. Speaker, when we were at the resolution stage considering this measure I mentioned the program which had been announced by the previous government for the development of thermal power in the maritime provinces. I mentioned that that program had been announced by Mr. Harris, then minister of finance, on March 14, and I myself had given details of the program on April 9, 1957. I repeat that because of the remarks made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I wish to refresh the hon. member's memory by reminding him that the program which had been announced by the previous administration was based on the provisions of the Northern Canada Power Commission Act. As a matter of fact, I wish to quote for the record what I said on that occasion on April 9, 1957, and I quote from page 3294 of *Hansard* for last session:

Hon. members will recall that at the last session of parliament an amendment to the Northwest Territories Power Commission Act was passed changing the name of the commission to the Northern Canada Power Commission and empowering it to acquire, operate and maintain power plants not only in the two territories but also in the provinces "with the approval of the governor in council but subject to the laws of the province in which the powers . . . are exercised".

It had not been thought at that time that the operation of the commission would ever extend to any part of Canada other than the territories or the northern limits of certain of the provinces. However, the legal position is that the commission can, with the approval of the governor in council and subject to the laws of the province concerned, operate in any province. The representatives of both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, but especially of the latter, raised considerations that gave urgency to the implementation of the federal proposal. In order to comply with the provincial desire that immediate action should be taken, the federal government has decided that the Northern Canada Power Commission should be designated as its agency to carry the proposals into effect.

I hope that in spite of what is in the bill—I do not want to refer to a particular clause—that when the minister comes to close the debate—and I hope he will do so—he will tell the house what will be the exact role of the Northern Canada Power Commission in the implementation of the policies to be carried out under this bill which we are now studying.

Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to enter into what is called, I believe, a "who dunit" contest with the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Hamilton), but surely the thing is clear—does this red ribbon affect the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Bell)?