

Atlantic Development Board Act

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that to undertake an investigation to determine the allegiance of union members to their leaders would be an extraordinary activity on the part of the Department of Labour.

ATLANTIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD ACT

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING MEMBERSHIP, FUNDS, ADMINISTRATION, ETC.

The house resumed from Tuesday, July 9, consideration in committee of Bill No. C-80, to amend the Atlantic Development Board Act—Mr. Pickersgill—Mr. Batten in the chair.

On clause 1—"Fund".

The Deputy Chairman: Shall clause 1 carry?

Mr. MacLean (Queens): Mr. Chairman, I would like to take a few moments of the time of the committee to say something about this legislation which potentially can be of such great importance to the maritime provinces and the Atlantic provinces, including of course Newfoundland. Ever since confederation we in the maritime provinces have had the experience of not sharing fully in the prosperity and general development of the economy of our country as a whole.

The fruits of confederation had been disappointing to us for many years, and many representatives from the maritimes, members of all parties in this house, repeatedly brought this situation to the attention of various governments. In fact it was not until six years ago that the special case of the Atlantic provinces was recognized, and special grants were made to the governments of those provinces which made it possible for them to raise the level of services such governments are called upon to provide, and which have many social connotations, as well as providing the environment, the necessary public works, roads, schools, educational institutions and so forth which are the prerequisite for economic development.

The previous government also passed legislation within the last 12 months to set up this development board for the maritime provinces, and I am a bit concerned that so early in the life of this legislation it is being amended. It would have been the course of wisdom to let the board operate under the original legislation to see how effective it would be and then, at a later date, make amendments if any were required in the light of the experience gained. I am sure this board is still only in the embryo stage, but already the legislation concerning it is being amended, even though when experience is gained I feel there will be further amendments necessary.

There are many projects and a great field of activity in which this board can operate,

and one of its problems will be to refrain from duplicating work already being done by other organizations or certain departments of government. It will have a very important role to carry out in the field of co-ordinating the efforts which are being made by all organizations, including governments, for the economic development of the maritime provinces, and in this I include projects which are put forward and prepared by private enterprise. This is perhaps the most important field of all.

Having made those few general remarks. Mr. Chairman, I want to comment on the proposed amendments. I regret very much that the board is being enlarged at this time. The Secretary of State, who is piloting this legislation through the house, uses the very fine-sounding phrase that the board is being strengthened. It does not necessarily follow that the board is being strengthened by being enlarged. What is being done is that we are enlarging the board to provide a membership of 11 rather than five in order that the appointees of the present government will have a majority on the board. I do not think this is necessarily a wise proposal. It has unfortunate political overtones which I for one regret.

The Secretary of State seems to have great faith in the Canadian people accepting his statements at face value, with blind faith. I think their experiences in the past do not justify the Canadian people, or the people in the maritime provinces anyway, in accepting statements from the Secretary of State with this type of unquestioning, blind faith. I would like to see the present members remain on the board until the term of office under which they were appointed has been completed. I would also like to see—if it is necessary, for the reasons given, to enlarge the board—the membership enlarged to nine only. I think a board with this membership would be quite large enough. Boards which have a large membership tend to be unwieldy. It will be difficult to obtain a quorum on occasion, and there are many other difficulties which can be envisaged. Nevertheless we are confronted with this amendment, and until this legislation is passed I suppose the present board is almost in a state of suspended animation and the progress which should be made by the board at the present time is probably not being made until their fate is made known to them.

I have some questions in mind which this legislation brings one to consider. One concerns the setting up of a fund of \$100 million for special purposes in the Atlantic provinces. It seems to me that including this provision in the legislation smacks of a concern on the