

*Atlantic Development Board*

**Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton):** May I ask my hon. friend a question? What was the amount again?

**Mr. Robichaud:** One billion dollars. I ask the minister now whether a commitment to that effect was made on a previous occasion by the Prime Minister. If such is the case, can the minister give the house some indication as to how this imposing sum may be distributed? Commenting on the announcement made by the Prime Minister during the last campaign to the effect that an Atlantic development board would be established, it was suggested by sources close to the Prime Minister that the first matters to be dealt with by this board would be the Chignecto canal and the Fundy tidal development. The minister made reference this afternoon to the Chignecto canal, but he did not refer to the Fundy development.

I should now like to ask the minister this question. After all the surveys on the physical feasibility of the project and its economic soundness, after all the statements made by members of the government to the effect that full and comprehensive studies had been carried out by officials of the departments concerned, must we now take it for granted that this new board will be much more effective in convincing the government that such projects must be proceeded without delay from the point of view of continuing to improve the standard of living in the Atlantic area?

I have a further question for the Minister of National Revenue. At the time of the appointment of the Gordon commission in 1944 Prime Minister St. Laurent invited the people of the Atlantic region to get together and submit proposals which would lead to the economic development of the area in order to assure a standard of living roughly equal to the national average. Such an invitation could not be left unanswered by the people of the Atlantic provinces.

The minister has referred in his remarks to the formation of the Atlantic provinces economic council. It is true that representatives of government, trade, industries, cultural institutions and financial groups lost no time in getting together and forming the Atlantic provinces economic council, commonly known as APEC. Since its inception in 1954 this organization has been largely a policy making and long range planning group of businessmen representing practically every line of business and industry in the Atlantic region. This group must have had a good knowledge of the problems and needs facing our area and from time to time must have offered new formulas in line with our special needs.

I recognize that the new president of APEC, chosen in September of this year, looks for big things from the proposed Atlantic provinces development board. Under his leadership APEC, with its board of 29 governors, has set out as its objective the selling of the region's needs to its own people and to the Canadian nation as a whole. It is hoped that the personnel of this new board will co-operate and spare no efforts to rouse our own people to further action and, at the same time, will go all out to have the rest of Canada realize that our systems of transportation, taxation, tariff charges and federal fiscal policies are detrimental to the interests and general welfare of the Atlantic region.

It has been said by members of the government that the Atlantic development board will be primarily a planning board. That statement was made by the Minister of Public Works in Halifax on November 16 of this year. The Prime Minister said during the last campaign:

—the proposed board will be made up of people familiar with problems of the Atlantic provinces. Their jobs will be to study these problems and make recommendations to the government.

It may be true that APEC may not be considered entirely as a development council; nevertheless one must admit that it has acted as a co-ordinator and promoter of development work in the Atlantic region. Now after five and a half years in office this government must recognize that in the Atlantic region the average of unemployed has been one in every ten available for work, compared with a national average in the last five years of 5½ per cent to 6 per cent in the rest of Canada. In his report made public in February, 1961 Professor Cairncross, who had just completed a study of economic development in the Atlantic provinces, had this to say:

The federal government must be the principal agent of policies to eliminate the lag in economic development of the Atlantic provinces.

Now, Mr. Chairman, in view of what I have said my next question of the Minister of National Revenue will be the following. Is the minister now prepared to admit that this government has failed in its five and a half years in office to act on the recommendations made by APEC to promote the development of the Atlantic region? Furthermore, what assurance can he now give the house—

**Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton):** Do you want me to answer that now?