

Trade with Caribbean Federation

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is not often vouchsafed to a humble backbencher to have in immediate sequence two "brief gaudy" hours on the private members' hour, and perhaps because of some of the remarks passed about me yesterday I should have stopped when I was slightly ahead! However, I am sure the subject matter of this motion is of importance to all hon. members, and I would like to discuss some of the aspects of trade with that part of the former British West Indies federation.

It is perhaps appropriate that a citizen of an island province should initiate the discussion on this matter concerning communities made up of islands. I also have a particular interest in this area, not only because I am a mariner but in my years of lecturing at certain maritime universities it was my pleasure to have in my classes many fine young people from the part of the world to which this resolution directs our attention.

I recall so well that on July 21, 1958, parliament had before it a motion by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. McIlraith), as he now is, which under the rules at that time we discussed for a full day. I thought I could do no better than model my motion on the wording of his, except that I altered the geographic area as a result of what has happened with the break-up of the former federation, that political community for which we all had such hopes but whose collapse did not surprise us so greatly; certainly it did not surprise many of the people living there. The geographic area which we are discussing here comprises the seven islands, Barbados, Antigua, St. Kitts, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Dominica. This is the little group sometimes called the outer seven, or the left out seven, now that the greater islands, Trinidad, Tobago and Jamaica have become independent states. Grenada has perhaps a special destiny in that it plans to become a part of the Trinidad and Tobago entity.

This collection of small islands is populated by less than three quarters of a million people. The land area is something like 1,300 square miles; but while the area is small, their problems are large: poor soil, shortage of water, lack of proper facilities, roads and airports, shortage of skilled labour, a crying need for capital in their effort to approach something like self-sufficiency, a pressing problem of overpopulation. Indeed, any economic study of these small islands demonstrates why the study of economics has often been described as a dismal science. Yet

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

these small and beautiful islands could have a fairly bright future. There is tremendous opportunity in tourism, and it is no doubt as tourists that most Canadians know this part of the south. Fun in the sun often takes Canadians to this part of the world. A possibility of broadening their industrial base and diversifying their agricultural industry is of course to the forefront in the planning of the people of these islands.

It is so clear that such small communities with such difficult economic problems and with such a limited economic base must require substantial assistance from outside. From whence shall it come? The United Kingdom has done much and its program of development there is impressive. The United States has helped. Some private developments have brought benefit to the indigenous population although one does not always expect, nor is he disappointed when it does not happen, that business enterprises are necessarily geared to the improvement of the people who live in the area of the enterprise. But Canada comes, I think, into this picture and presents a splendid opportunity for this area. We have historic ties with this part of the country, especially we mariners. In our days of glory, the days of the wooden ship, the iron men and the golden prosperity—long before the time of any of us, I must say, alas—we had close ties. Ships from Prince Edward Island and all parts of the maritimes carried goods to and from the West Indies. As early as 1855 efforts were made to establish a preferential trade agreement with these areas. This was thwarted by the British colonial office. This was in the days before Alexander Galt asserted our economic independence from our former mother country. In 1898 we had the first sugar agreement. In 1912, under the government of Robert Borden and under the auspices of that great mariner Sir George Foster, we initiated our first trade agreement on a reciprocal basis. This was extended in 1920 and 1926. And so on over the years. I am not going to take the time of the house by going into the figures, Mr. Speaker, but there has developed a substantial trade between Canada, especially eastern Canada, and all the West Indies islands, including of course the islands to which this resolution directs our attention.

In 1962 our trade in exports to Barbados was something like \$4½ million. That is a substantial sum. Barbados is, of course, a very small community. Our imports were \$3,170,000. These figures are in Canadian dollars. There are some commodities which are of special