

Atlantic Development Board

charitable welfare from the rest of Canada but the area which can and will lead the economic recovery our nation needs as it goes forward to fulfil our obligations not only to ourselves but to the generations which are to come after us.

Mr. MacInnis: Mr. Chairman, it is not my intention to make a prolonged speech this afternoon. I have already been very fortunate in having the opportunity to speak on two other occasions with regard to the problems of the Atlantic provinces of Canada. It is very encouraging this afternoon to find from all corners of the chamber some very desirable and in my opinion very objective and worth-while suggestions being brought before the members of this committee.

There is no question at all about the desirability of such a move. As the minister indicated in his opening remarks, this is at least recognition of the problem that has existed in the Atlantic provinces over the years. It is a first step. We are all highly appreciative of the move. Nevertheless this is the first process in adopting legislation with regard to these problems and I feel that it is the responsibility of each of us who are vitally concerned with the matter to make some observations with regard to the resolution with a view to the bill which will be presented to us eventually. I think that this is good procedure. I expect that the minister and the other members of the government will be sufficiently broadminded and objective to perhaps bear in mind and keep in the forefront of their consideration certain of the proposals that will come out during this discussion.

I should like to point out first of all that it is very encouraging to hear the minister review the conditions which have existed in the Atlantic provinces over the years and to a more serious degree in recent years. It is not very long ago, just last June and last spring, when we had ministers of the crown, responsible members of the government of the day, coming to our area and telling us that really our problems were not too bad, that conditions were not as we were suggesting they were. I therefore think this is a good step, recognizing that we have a problem, and as opposed to the statements of the hon. member for Red Deer. I agree with him however that we do not like to talk in terms of a depressed area. I agree with him that we have resources in the Atlantic provinces. We have tremendous resources. None of us, in my opinion, would go so far as to suggest, as did the then minister of national revenue, now the Minister of Finance, that we are going to develop another Toronto in the area. I do not know

that we want another Toronto. I say that with all due respect for certain members of my own group. We agree that we have these resources, but at the same time we are obliged to recognize the fact that it has been a depressed area. This becomes clear when you experience unemployment rates which are double the national average; when you experience thousands of people on relief and receiving welfare services; when you experience, without going into detail the trends in employment in particular industries in the manufacturing field where between 1952 and January 1962 our work force was reduced from 33,000 to 24,000; where employment in the coal industry has been reduced from 11,000 miners to 5,700 and in primary iron and steel from 5,300 to 2,800. If you examine unemployment trends in this area in relation to those in any other area in Canada or in all of Canada; if you examine the comparative wage and salary structure; if you examine the construction rates per hour in relation to those in other industrial areas; if you examine average hourly industrial earnings; if you examine net incomes of farm operators—and I could go on and on with taxation figures and what have you—the story is the same. This has been a depressed area. Conditions have been serious. The time has arrived for due attention and due action.

The hon. member for Gloucester during the course of his speech suggested, it seemed to me, that the field of activity for this board is unlimited. At least this is what I understood from his remarks. Again I think we must disagree with this particular view. It is true that there are many things that we would expect such a board and the federal government to accomplish in this area, but surely their field is not unlimited. We have many problems in the Atlantic provinces. The government of the day or the government of the previous day is not responsible for all of them and cannot be expected to solve all of them. I think where their greater responsibility lies is not in that they brought about the problems but in that they have refused to face the challenge that these problems have presented. In other words, what we might criticize them for is not so much the fact that the problems exist but rather the fact that they have failed to take effective action to deal with them.

So I suggest that the federal government, through the Atlantic development board or any other agency, cannot be expected to solve all our problems. Even if they could solve all of the problems that we face in this area, I suggest this would not be a desirable course of action. We in this region still have some pride. There are some things we want to do