

*Atlantic Development Board*

Revenue will give us the assurance that the Atlantic development board will not enter into conflict with the national economic board.

The Minister of National Revenue, in moving this resolution this afternoon, stated the reasons for the formation of an Atlantic development board, and he defined its duties. At the outset I wish the minister to know that we of the official opposition will support this resolution, although we will reserve the right to comment on the bill itself after we are given the opportunity to study its content. I may add that I believe I shall be the only speaker on the Liberal side of the chamber at this resolution stage, although more members on this side from the Atlantic region will wish to participate when we have seen the bill and second reading is moved.

The minister in introducing his resolution quoted the reference in the speech from the throne to the Atlantic development board. I agree with the minister and say that in the past many attempts have been made in that regard. I agree that for some time it has been in the minds of the people of the Atlantic provinces. I may state further that it was part of the recommendation in the report of the Gordon commission which was made public in 1957. The minister also referred to the desirability of working together, and he gave as an example the Atlantic provinces economic council known as APEC which, since its inception in 1954, has made different recommendations to the provincial and federal governments. In the course of my remarks I will be referring further to the work which has been done by this organization from the Atlantic provinces.

The minister also stated that such a move has been in the mind of this government since 1957. I would ask the minister this question. In view of the circumstances and conditions of the Atlantic provinces, why has it waited five years before bringing this measure into effect? As the minister said in quoting an article from the *Atlantic Advocate*, the economy of Canada is only as strong as its weakest region. He referred to the income of the Atlantic provinces which is one third lower, and investment capital which is approximately only half of what it is in the rest of Canada. He also referred to special projects which have been brought to the attention of the government from time to time, such as the Chignecto canal and the Prince Edward Island causeway. Later he referred to the mining possibilities both in the northern and southwestern parts of the province of New Brunswick.

The minister also referred to the price of power in the Atlantic provinces, which is of major importance in the development of our economy. He seemed to take full credit for

[Mr. Robichaud.]

the grid system which is now in existence in the three maritime provinces. I should like to point out that this grid system was the idea of the minister of northern affairs and national resources under the previous administration, Mr. Lesage. This measure was proposed by Mr. Lesage and was included in the budget of Mr. Harris in March of 1957. In fact the provinces concerned had accepted the idea in principle long before this government ever took office. I must also add that the establishment of an Atlantic development board in part confirms and implements today what we of the official opposition have been suggesting in this house for the last four or five years, notwithstanding the fact that when we made proposals to that effect because of the urgent need we were branded as prophets of doom and gloom and were accused of trying to sell our country short.

Members from the Atlantic region sitting today on the government side, including the Minister of Finance, have not forgotten, I am sure, that on numerous occasions in this house they voted against proposed measures to strengthen the basic economy of the Atlantic provinces. I do not want to comment on votes that have been taken previously but I should like to refer, for example, to the vote taken in this house on June 8, 1959. I might also add that they are the same members who on May 24, 1960, voted against a measure asking for the establishment of a national board of economic development. Yet these same members are now suggesting the formation of a similar organization. Also on May 3, 1960, when a vote was called on a motion by the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate to provide federal aid to the Atlantic provinces, every government member from the Atlantic region voted against the proposal. The present Minister of Finance and the now absent "so what" minister from St. John's West were among those who opposed the motion at that time. I have no doubt that this action explains why the Minister of National Revenue, who was not a member of the house at the time and was not called upon to vote against such a proposal, has been called upon today to introduce this resolution, which would have been quite embarrassing for the Minister of Finance.

As I said earlier, we will support the resolution now before us, but I reserve the right to direct to the Minister of National Revenue certain questions which I should like to have answered before the conclusion of this debate. I ask, Mr. Chairman, whether we are correct in assuming that this board will channel at least an extra \$1 billion into the region in the next ten years?