

Atlantic Development Board Act

parliament. He was appointed by the government of which the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton was a member. His place on the board was continued by legislation at the request of the present government, and I may say he was a most valued member of that board during the time he served on it. I am sure he would echo the view which I am expressing now, that we have tried to think only of one thing, the development of the economy of the Atlantic provinces.

• (3:50 p.m.)

I am very proud of what has already been accomplished. I feel sure, if we continue along the lines we have followed up until now, that all of us in parliament, regardless of what part of Canada we may come from or what political parties we may belong to, will feel that this is a work for which parliament is responsible, that it is helping to build up Canada and helping to create a better balance for a region which for many reasons did not advance as rapidly economically as other parts of Canada. I believe this legislation will give a real stimulus to the region.

Mr. Flemming: Mr. Chairman, my remarks will be brief at this stage. We appreciate the information which the minister has given us in connection with the general aims and objectives of the legislation to follow passage of this resolution. I believe my hon. friend from Kings wishes to make some comments about the resolution. I have no reason to think that they will be extended and I feel certain we can make good progress with the measure because we are almost completely unanimous as to the benefits which will be derived from it.

I feel that the minister's remarks concerning the advisability on occasion of having the federal government undertake certain projects are well-founded. There is no doubt that there are times when for one reason or another, and I do not think it necessary to elaborate, it becomes necessary for the federal government to undertake certain projects through an agency in which it has confidence, and if this amending legislation fills some of the omissions in the original statute no one in the chamber could have any objection to it.

In connection with the Atlantic Development Board I wish to emphasize the question of the initiation of projects. I do not believe that the initiation of projects should always rest with a provincial government or a municipality, but naturally the board, in keeping with the general terms of reference

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

given to it, will work through the medium of the provincial governments to the greatest possible extent, with the general interest in mind of fulfilling a long-felt need in that part of Canada from which the minister and I come.

As I have indicated, my hon. friend from Kings will have some remarks to make. He will bring much knowledge to the committee of the problems that have beset the board, he himself having served on it. No doubt what he has to say will be of great benefit to the Atlantic provinces region and to the activities of the board.

Mr. Brewin: Mr. Chairman, we in this party are also not disposed to prolong discussion of the resolution. As the minister has told us it contains nothing very new or revolutionary in principle. It simply embodies the extension of legislation of which all parties in the house approved. But since the minister appealed to members who are not resident in the Atlantic provinces to try to become aware of some of the questions and problems besetting that region, I wish to say that we in the New Democratic Party are heartily in favour of the Atlantic Development Board because it is an instrument of regional planning.

We believe in regional planning as a vital policy to reduce the inequities and inequalities in income and other standards as between different regions of Canada. We are aware of the chronic absence of equality of opportunity in certain areas. In this connection I would like to refer once again to the 1965 annual report of the Economic Council of Canada. I quoted from it the other day when the hon. member for Queens introduced a resolution dealing with the trade problems of the Atlantic provinces, and I wish to place this on the record again:

Our analysis has shown that over a period of almost four decades embracing buoyant expansion, a severe depression, a prolonged war and a period of revived national growth, the regional problem in Canada has remained essentially unchanged. Large inter-regional disparities in per capita income have stubbornly persisted despite various forces working towards better balance. These have included significant redistribution of population, far reaching adjustments in the structure of economic activity at the national level, and certain public policies aimed at greater equalization of regional incomes. Against such a background, the narrowing of income disparities and the achievement of this result consistently with other basic economic and social objectives, remains one of the most difficult issues confronting the country as a whole.