

Trade with Caribbean Federation

There are compelling reasons and the first is the break-up of the federation. Then, too, there should be consideration given to the inroads of communism in the Caribbean area generally. I only want to put on the record two of the main reasons for my support of this resolution. First, there is the great benefit that would accrue to the maritimes, which is in such close proximity to the West Indies. This whole section of Canada, I mean the maritimes, is in a period of transformation and is searching for new industries, new communications. We could orient these plans with the West Indies. I think that Halifax and Saint John, which are facing many problems because of the movement inland of navigation as a result of the seaway, would benefit greatly from any expansion of relations with the West Indies.

Then, there is the undisputed fact that the West Indies themselves are counting on us for assistance. There may be disagreement as to how this assistance would be given, but certainly that statement is true. Those of us who spent time in the West Indies on parliamentary business realize that this is true. I see the Clerk Assistant following this debate closely, and I was on one such conference with him. We certainly got to know the problems of that area. We who have been on these conferences realize that transportation difficulties and the lack of natural resources have caused these people to turn to their wealthy northern commonwealth friends here in Canada, whom they value most highly, for assistance. There is the pertinent fact too that with communist inroads in the Caribbean, the benefits would be far reaching in the ideological battle that is taking place.

I do feel that I can answer one contention that has been put forward. I want to say that the remarks that have been made by the previous speakers have been well informed and thoughtful and I certainly could not improve in any way on the details. However, I believe the main reason the proposer of this motion has merely suggested particular islands in the West Indies and excluded Trinidad, Tobago and Jamaica, is that the two larger islands I have mentioned feel they are self-sufficient. They have indicated they want to go ahead on their own. While we can assist them, they may not be so interested in free trade relations. The smaller islands are in extreme difficulties and we would be assisting them greatly.

In closing, I welcome this opportunity of supporting the motion put forward by the hon. member for Queens (Mr. Macquarrie) in such a statesmanlike way. I will not compliment him, because last night during the debate on Sir John A. Macdonald he was complimented so much I wondered whether they were talking about Sir John A. or the hon. member for Queens (Mr. Macquarrie). Nevertheless, the motion is timely. I hope the government will move on this matter in some way, and help these islands in the West Indies in the way that has been suggested here.

Mr. Gerald A. Regan (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I think there can be no question but that the hon. member for Queens (Mr. Macquarrie) has done a fine service in bringing this matter to the attention of the house and of the government.

The eastern portion of the British West Indies that would constitute the proposed new federation are about as lovely a group of islands as one could imagine, a delightful land of sun and sand, and much more. Their products have been mentioned by previous speakers, and I think this is a land with which we should develop much closer ties for quite a number of reasons, some of which have also been mentioned this afternoon.

I am not at all sure that free trade with this area would begin to solve the problems that exist as regards its economy and as regards our relations with the area. The problems are much more complex, but we must make moves towards closer relations with the area.

Last month I had the honour to represent the Canadian branch of the commonwealth parliamentary association at a parliamentary course in London, and during my time in England I had the opportunity to meet daily with representatives at that course from Dominica, Montserrat, and the Virgin islands, as well as some of the other areas in the West Indies. I was reminded by the remark of the hon. member for Queens (Mr. Macquarrie) concerning the quality of the young men from those areas he had known in maritime universities, and I am quick to say I seldom had the opportunity to spend time with more delightful people or with men who were more interested in the ultimate welfare of their areas.

I would also associate myself with the remarks of the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) concerning the British commonwealth. These islands are not economically able to stand alone as yet. It may be