

*Atlantic Provinces Power Development*

now being introduced by the minister. The legislation introduced by the minister is confined to the four Atlantic provinces. The legislation already on the statute books relates to the whole of Canada. The bill being brought in by the minister relates to thermal power projects only, plus a reference to transmission lines. The legislation already on the statute books relates to electrical power projects of any kind, hydraulic, thermal or otherwise. The only thing that this new bill may have that the present legislation does not have, and I am not sure it is not there in a catch-all section that is in chapter 42 of the statutes of 1956, is the specific right of the federal government to enter into financial agreements with the provincial governments.

I suggest, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that a better approach to this matter than the one which is before us now would have been for the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources to move an amendment to the Northern Canada Power Commission Act, as it is now called although it is not yet so listed in the index, writing into that statute provision for the federal government to enter into financial agreements with any of the provincial governments in pursuance of the power that is already there to develop power projects in any part of Canada, and to develop them in respect of power by means of thermal units, hydraulic plants or in any way shape or form, as is already spelled out in the legislation which we now have.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to support this legislation if it is the only kind of legislation under which this government will do something to help develop power in certain parts of the Atlantic provinces. We think that what is good for them is good for the whole of Canada. But we still feel, Mr. Speaker, that it would have been better to present this matter to parliament in terms of a nationwide policy. We think the basis of such a nation-wide policy in legislative form was already there in the Northern Canada Power Commission Act, which is on the statute books. We think if that act had been amended to provide for agreements with the provinces, it would have been possible then to do everything that can be done under this bill, and more. It would have provided for hydraulic projects as well as thermal projects, and it would also have permitted arrangements of this kind in Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Manitoba, Alberta and other parts of Canada where these projects are sorely needed, and where their development would be good for Canada as a whole.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

I ask the government to read again the submission on this point that was made to the federal government by Premier Campbell of Manitoba. I ask the government to consider further the submissions on this whole question that have been made by the government of Saskatchewan. I suggest that if the government across the way really means what it says when it talks about a national development policy that it has the opportunity of putting that policy into effect in this very field. Tremendous vistas of economic development do open up for Canada if we can develop electrical power. This is true for the maritimes, and that is why we are glad to see something being done. It is for this reason this bill has our vote to a man.

But, Mr. Speaker, what would be good for the maritimes would be good for Ontario and Quebec; it would be good for the whole of western Canada. We support Premier Campbell's suggestion of a vast power grid that might extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The provinces cannot do this alone, without federal assistance and federal initiative. But even the federal government cannot give assistance to all the provinces under this bill that is now before parliament. Under this bill the federal government can do what is proposed only for the Atlantic provinces. Under this bill assistance in the field of hydraulic power cannot be given; assistance under this bill is limited to thermal projects.

After this bill passes we shall be left with two pieces of legislation in this field. We shall have the Northern Canada Power Commission Act which provides for the development of power anywhere in Canada and which provides for that development to be in respect of thermal units, hydraulic units or any other means. It lacks only one element, namely the right to enter into financial agreements with the provinces. On the other hand we shall have this limited piece of legislation relating to the Atlantic provinces which, as I say, provides for assistance only in respect of thermal projects and which is a denial of the Prime Minister's promise to the maritime provinces that he would not lay before them just cut and dried proposals.

So, Mr. Speaker, whatever happens to this bill,—that is, whether the government will consider broadening it and amending it in committee, and I think that could be done; and I hope that attention will be paid to any amendments that are made—we feel that the aim should be a federal policy in the field of power aiming at developing to the fullest extent our power resources right across Canada, whether it be on the basis of