SECTION F

SPECIAL CLAIMS

Chapter

I. Compensation for the Adverse Effects of Federal Policies.
II. Claim of British Columbia for Revision of Subsidies.
III. British Columbia's Claim as to Pacific Great Eastern Railway.
IV. Saskatchewan's Claim for Revision of the Natural Resources Award.
V. Claims Concerning Trade through Maritime Ports.
VI. Other New Brunswick Claims.
VII. Prince Edward Island Claims.
We have left for consideration in this section a number of claims presented by individual provinces which sought relief from the Dominion as a matter of right, rather than of law. In so far as their character is monetary these claims, whatever their strength, would have no practical importance if effect were given to our financial proposals and in such an event it would matter not at all whether we rejected these claims or allowed them. We believe that every province which has presented claims to us would be better off under our proposals than if effect were given to its claims and the proposals disregarded; and, under the method of calculation which we have followed, a province could not improve its financial position as a matter of right, without diminishing in equal degree the amount due to it on the basis of fiscal need until this amount reached zero. It could not, therefore, have both the benefit of the claims which we are about to consider and of the subsidies and debt relief which we have already recommended.

It is, perhaps, not altogether fortuitous that claims should have been presented on behalf of provinces for which we have recommended aid on other grounds. A claim is apt to be the reflection of a need, and the strength of the need is apt to reinforce the conviction that the claim is just. A province which has not prospered under Confederation, relatively to other provinces, is alert to find ways in which it appears to have been wronged, or in which federal policies appear to have operated to its disadvantage. And it is precisely to help provinces which have prospered less than others (on the ground that a proper conception of Confederation requires that their governments should be kept in a financial position to provide services on Canadian standards) that our main financial proposals are designed.

Yet it is important that these claims should be discussed. Some of them are not monetary in character but concern wide issues of policy. Even the monetary claims become of obvious significance only if our main proposals are not implemented. Like all claims of right, they are accompanied by a feeling of grievance—a feeling which is detrimental to national unity. We have, therefore, felt it our duty to give full consideration to every claim presented to us. In so doing we do not consider that we are going beyond our terms of reference. Although we were not appointed as a claims commission our mandate was extremely wide and a thorough consideration of the claims of the provinces was necessary if a picture were to be formed of their true financial position and of that of the Dominion, because an award of compensation on any of these claims would have altered the fiscal need of the province concerned. Moreover, a report which left numerous claims outstanding would be an unsatisfactory basis for the permanent adjustment of the financial relations between the Dominion and the provinces. Some of the claims are of so general a character as to raise issues of vital importance to the federal system. These are discussed in the chapter immediately following this. Other claims were more specialized. British Columbia in particular had been led to expect that this Commission would deal with its claim, which was of very long-standing, and we received special instructions from the Dominion Government to deal with it. It would have been out of the question to deny to other provinces a privilege accorded to one of them, and we, therefore, felt that we had been, by implication, expected to deal with other special claims as well.