

Columbia River Treaty

Peace river to the lower mainland at reasonable, if not cheap, rates.

In recent days, however, information has been getting out that the government of British Columbia now faces a crisis because it has become evident, as was known, of course, to many informed people before, that power from the Peace river cannot be delivered to the settled areas of southern British Columbia for anything like an economic cost. The figures now being quoted as tentative estimates of the cost run in the neighbourhood of 10 mills per kilowatt hour.

I suggest to you, sir, that what we are experiencing now with this treaty is nothing short of a fiasco. The settled areas of British Columbia are being denied low cost power. British Columbia is being saddled with the high Arrow dam which produces no benefits to the province except a quick sale of downstream benefits at the cost of flooding an important section of the interior of British Columbia. The inclusion of high Arrow, according to Mr. Fulton, was the result of intervention by British Columbia. Therefore one can only assume that Mr. Bennett was interested in a quick dollar return from the high Arrow dam without consideration for the long range effects of this development. In spite of the fact that it was most difficult to get firm figures from the British Columbia witnesses who appeared before the committee, it is well known that the cost of the high Arrow dam has at least doubled since the original estimates were made, and that the increase has completely destroyed the cost-benefit ratio which was presented to the committee.

The outlook for industrial development in southeastern British Columbia now is left in a very precarious and dim position. The opportunity for low cost power has been abandoned by this treaty, at least for some 10 or 15 years, and this has been done purely at the instance of Mr. Bennett. The door has been shut to any diversion of water to the arid areas of central Canada, and I suggest that quite apart from the legal aspects of the interpretation of this treaty which were put by my hon. friend from Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) yesterday, common sense and experience tell us that vested interests are sure to arise in the vicinity of the Libby dam which would render it politically impossible for Canada to proceed with the sort of development which will be required in our own arid central areas. This situation also is the responsibility of those who are insisting on this treaty.

[Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

I should like to quote from an editorial in the *Calgary Albertan* of June 2 of this year, in which it is suggested that the three prairie provinces must stand shoulder to shoulder at this juncture and make all haste to present their case to the authorities in Ottawa before they lose their future by default. This is the attitude of fellow citizens in the prairie provinces which has been completely disregarded by this government and by the external affairs committee.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That is not the case.

Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): The Secretary of State for External Affairs says this is not the case, but he has not answered the argument. He has consistently refused to present a reasoned legal opinion to answer the contention of my colleague from Greenwood. He has also, it seems to me, dismissed altogether the common sense argument that vested interests will of necessity develop in the neighbourhood of the Libby dam, and he persists in asserting something to be true, as he did throughout these hearings, without producing the slightest evidence to support his submissions.

I may say it was a sad spectacle to see certain members of that committee who, by their past statements, knew perfectly well the shortcomings of the treaty, obediently coming to the rescue of the government and asserting that all was well because of the signing of a protocol which, I may say, did not alter in any significant way the conditions of which they had been complaining until a few months ago. To me it was a melancholy spectacle, and I am not surprised at the reluctance evident on the part of some of the hon. members of that committee to take part in this debate; the careful figure skating necessary to avoid the soft spots in the ice created by their past statements, would have been quite daunting.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): On a point of order, may I say it is contrary to the rules to comment on the refusal or failure of a member to take part in a debate. The only reason other members have not taken part in this debate is because they feel there has been adequate discussion in the house. They recognize the importance of passing this measure, and it is a reflection on those members of the committee who have not spoken, to have it said, by the hon. gentleman, that they are afraid to take part in the debate because of the arguments he is using.