

Northern Canada Power Commission Act

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): The last speech was interesting, Mr. Speaker. It was interesting because to a large extent the hon. member for Pembina (Mr. Bigg) when speaking for 40 minutes ranged from one end of the country to the other. He circled the world. I listened very carefully, but on no occasion did he deal with either the Yukon or the Northwest Territories.

Some hon. Members: You weren't listening.

Mr. Orlikow: I was listening. We were told that the great fault of this bill is that it is a socialist bill. The hon. member for Pembina asks Members of Parliament to reject this bill because it calls for nationalizing power. I wish it did, but it does not. My colleague, the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) pointed out, I think correctly, that the objections to this bill which we heard from the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) are that the hon. member for Yukon really believes that the private power company in that area can do a better job than if it were publicly owned. He is entitled to his opinion, but the facts as we have seen them in Canada do not bear him out.

The hon. member for Pembina tried to tell us that the difficulties in respect of power have been brought about because we in this party and members of the party opposite have been seduced by the teachings of the British socialists. I think I am correct in saying that the hydroelectric system in Ontario was made a publicly-owned corporation in 1905 when the British Labour Party was just beginning. It was made a public corporation by a Conservative government, under Sir Adam Beck.

If publicly-owned power is such a terrible thing, I suggest to the hon. member for Pembina that now is a good time to put that argument forward. The Conservative party of Ontario is going into a leadership contest, and I suggest to the hon. member that he approach the five candidates who are vying for leadership and try to convince them that publicly-owned power is bad for Ontario. He should try to convince whichever one becomes premier of Ontario that he ought to sell Ontario Hydro to private enterprise. I wonder how much support he would get from the Ontario Conservative party. It would be interesting to see.

Mr. Bigg: What would that do?

Mr. Orlikow: Ontario is not the only province which has publicly-owned power. In my province of Manitoba the last privately-owned power company was turned into a public utility by a Liberal government. In British Columbia the privately-owned power systems were turned into a publicly-owned power system by a Social Credit government. In Saskatchewan it was the CCF government which created a publicly-owned power system. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick the power system is publicly owned. One of the things which distinguishes Canada from the United States is that we have hardly any privately-owned power systems in this country. Alberta is about the only province which still has a privately-owned power system.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

Why do we have publicly-owned systems? It is because in every province they came to the conclusion, after the most careful study, that publicly-owned power could be brought to the people of the provinces concerned more cheaply and efficiently than by private companies. The reasons for that are pretty obvious.

Mr. Forrestall: Prove it.

Mr. Orlikow: If you want to build power facilities it is necessary to borrow large amounts of money, and no private corporation can borrow money as cheaply as can a publicly-owned corporation, provincial or federal.

Mr. Forrestall: Nonsense.

Mr. Orlikow: Let the hon. member look at what happened in Nova Scotia, where power is publicly owned.

Mr. Forrestall: It is also privately owned.

Mr. Orlikow: Not many years ago—I think most members in the House were here—a Liberal government in the province of Quebec took over all the private power facilities in the province and created one publicly-owned power corporation.

Mr. Comeau: Sure, the Liberals did that.

Mr. Orlikow: Yes, the Liberals in Quebec and the Conservatives in Ontario. That is precisely what I said. They did this because it has been proven conclusively that public systems can operate more cheaply than private companies. To appreciate this one only needs to go to Niagara Falls, in the province of Ontario, and compare the cost of power there with the cost of power in Niagara Falls, New York State. One sees the difference. In New York State power is still privately owned. So I say to the hon. member for Pembina that this bill does not call for the creation of a publicly-owned power system in the Yukon. If it did, I would support it much more vigorously than I do at the present time. But if it did, it would provide the people of the Yukon with cheaper power more quickly than the privately-owned system has, as has already happened in nearly all other parts of Canada.

● (9:20 p.m.)

I close by saying a few words about a matter to which the hon. member for Pembina referred repeatedly. I shall try to be briefer than he was. He suggested that Britain is in great difficulties because it was governed by a socialist government. He seemed to imply that all the resources and industries of Great Britain were publicly owned. That is not true. The vast majority of industries and resources in Great Britain are still privately owned. He compared Great Britain unfavourably with other European countries which belong to the European Common Market.

I suggest to the hon. member that if he were to read about countries like France and Italy, I am sure he would be amazed at what he would learn. He would also learn that what I am about to say is true. In France, Italy and other countries in western Europe, a much greater pro-