

*Supply—Atomic Energy Control Board*

today that this development is already proving to be of tremendous importance to Canada, and apparently we are going to have atomic power much sooner than was expected at that time. The effects upon our economy will probably be extremely far-reaching. It does seem to me it would be wise for some provision to be made so that the house would be kept as closely informed as is reasonably possible. The committee plan might not be the right way, but it is the only plan which comes to my mind at the moment.

In the United States, as the minister knows, there is a committee of congress which has been in existence for many years and has done very good work. They also have a committee made up of civilians, and I believe a third committee from the armed forces. But here in Canada we have no such plan. Can the minister tell us what he has in mind to meet the situation, namely the necessity for keeping parliament in close touch with this vital development?

**Mr. Howe:** Mr. Chairman, the answer to the first question is that the atomic energy control board is in charge of all atomic energy operations in Canada. It controls the mining of the raw material, and of the work at Chalk River. The new crown company is a creature of the atomic energy control board.

**Mr. Green:** Set up under that act?

**Mr. Howe:** The Atomic Energy Control Act. We took authority in the act to set up a crown company to manage Chalk River. At the present time, as previously, the atomic energy control board has delegated its management of the plant to the national research council. It is now taking back its authority and delegating it to a crown company which has just been formed. I think that perhaps covers the point. The atomic energy control board is in charge of all atomic energy work in Canada. Let us put it that way.

**Mr. Green:** To what extent is that control exercised? The chief man in both the board and the new company will be Dr. Mackenzie, I presume?

**Mr. Howe:** That is right. There must be a very close interrelation of the control of atomic energy, and in Canada that has been vested in the atomic energy control board. The board can do almost anything it likes. It could stop mining in Canada. The main duties of the board today are to prescribe regulations under which information can be given out and to prescribe regulations under which raw materials can be mined, and in general to keep the secrecy side of the project in

[Mr. Green.]

tune with the secrecy provisions in the United States and Great Britain. The board has never been equipped to do the actual operating. I think it is perhaps wise that it keeps a little removed from the day-to-day operating, and is thus able to view the whole picture.

So far as a parliamentary committee is concerned, I have no objection to a parliamentary committee. I think the hon. member asked for a committee in the first place, and we lost no time in setting it up. In 1950 it was suggested there should be another parliamentary committee. At that time I said that in the interval there did not seem to be enough difference in the situation at Chalk River to warrant another full dress committee, and that instead the committee might like to look over the whole of the research council activities. This advice was followed. Last year there was no such committee. There could be a committee this year. Of course, it is extremely difficult to take a committee into our confidence as much as we would like, owing to the rapid progress of secrecy provisions. We have the McMahon committee, of which my friend thinks so highly, in the United States. It is very jealous of the information that goes out of the United States, and our chance of obtaining information from that country depends largely on our ability to keep the secrets that we have. It makes it difficult—

**Mr. Green:** The information given to this parliamentary committee did not escape to Russia or anything like that.

**Mr. Howe:** I know, but if twenty-eight people know something the information is more apt to get abroad. I would not like to imply that any adverse results came from the visit of the first committee. But all our people are working under secrecy wraps, and it is difficult to bring them before a parliamentary committee and expect them not to divulge information which may prejudice our position abroad. Therefore that is one of the reasons why I am not particularly desirous of sponsoring a committee. If a group of the members of the house feel that we should have a committee, I shall not oppose it. I am more or less neutral on the subject. I cannot get very enthusiastic for a committee, and I cannot be very strongly against it. If the hon. member wants to talk it over with the members of the earlier committee, and if he then thinks that something would be gained by the re-establishment of a committee at this session, I would not be against it.

**Mr. Green:** Now that the industrial uses of atomic energy have become so important,