

THE SENATE

Thursday, December 8, 1949

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

DIPLOMATIC AND TRADE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL—CLAIMS AGAINST CZECHOSLOVAKIA

INQUIRIES

On notices of inquiries.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Honourable senators, I may say to my honourable friend from Toronto-Trinity (Hon. Mr. Roebuck) that I have not overlooked the inquiries of which he gave notice a day or so ago. As a matter of fact, I have the answers in my office. They come from three departments, and require consolidation. I shall present them as soon as this is completed, either this afternoon or at the next sitting.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Honourable senators,

NATIONAL DEFENCE BILL

THIRD READING POSTPONED

On the Order:

Third reading, Bill J-5, as amended, an Act respecting national defence.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Honourable senators, there is no urgent need for passing this bill today, for it could not possibly be disposed of in the other house during the current session, and as the Banking and Commerce Committee is desirous of resuming consideration of the Income Tax Bill as soon as the Senate rises it has been suggested to me that this order be allowed to stand for the time being.

The Hon. the Speaker: The order stands.

CANADA FORESTRY BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Second reading of Bill 62, an Act respecting Forest Conservation.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Honourable senators, I have asked my government colleague, the honourable senator from Edmonton, to handle this bill.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. J. A. MacKinnon moved second reading of the bill.

He said: Honourable senators, may I thank my leader in this chamber for giving me this opportunity to make my first speech in the Senate? As I returned only at noon

today from a trip to the West Indies, made necessary by government requirements, my remarks on this bill will be somewhat shorter and more formal than they otherwise would be. I left Barbados yesterday morning and arrived in Ottawa at noon today, and have not had much opportunity to prepare a full explanation of the bill.

Honourable senators, it is with considerable personal pleasure that I move second reading of the Canada Forestry Bill. This measure represents a major forward step in conserving a great natural resource of this country. It contains proposals on which there is a very wide measure of agreement throughout Canada. It deals with a subject to which I gave close study and attention during the period I served as Minister of Mines and Resources. The groundwork of this particular legislation was firmly constructed by my predecessors in that portfolio.

I doubt if there is today any subject in the field of public administration in Canada which commands greater unanimity than that of forest conservation. Over the years there has been a steady growth in public awareness of, and interest in, forest maintenance. It is realized on all sides that our forests are not only a basic resource but a national as well as a provincial trust.

In its 1945 proposals to the Dominion-Provincial Conference, the federal government, as part of a recommended public investment program, urged a widely-expanded forestry policy. This covered protection of regional watersheds and demonstration projects and it proposed assistance to the provinces in the preservation and management of forests, including protection against fire, insects and disease.

Within the past five years provincial royal commissions have reported on the forestry situation in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Ontario. In each report there are definite references to the desirability of federal assistance in the forestry field. Even though the ownership of Canadian forests and other natural resources is vested in the provinces, there can be no doubt that the federal government has very definite responsibilities in forestry matters. The measure now before this chamber offers a logical approach towards the provision of a statutory authority for the proper discharge of those federal obligations.

This bill contemplates two things. First, it provides for the establishment of national forests or forest experimental areas on lands belonging to the Crown in the right of Canada; and second, it empowers the federal government to enter into agreements with the provinces for a number of purposes relating to forest conservation.