

Now, Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank you and the members of the committee for the patient hearing you have given me on these involved matters of detail. Before I sit down, I would appreciate it if you would bear with me for a few moments to consider the broad fundamental factors which underlie this matter.

In the first place, I, in common with nearly everyone in this room, have since babyhood been fed with patriotic speeches about

- A. The illimitable resources of our country,
- B. The boundless natural assets of our country,
- C. The potential wealth of our country, etc., etc.

Mr. Chairman, natural resources, no matter how boundless, do not fructify by themselves. They require the services of labour and capital to develop and use them, before they can contribute one penny to the wealth, comfort, and happiness of the people of this country.

Mr. Chairman, the fundamental basis of the submission of this Bill to Parliament is that we be allowed to develop, with labour and capital and all the resources of modern science, one of the greatest of our natural resources, viz., the Ottawa River. We want to convert that natural resource, that potential asset, into a present asset, into the present income which results from development. It means income in the form of savings to all classes of the community. It means development which implies work at profitable rates for large numbers of the people of this country. It means all the benefits of the canal.

Mr. Chairman, I submit that this Ottawa River has been a potential asset long enough. If this Bill is rejected, I submit that the Ottawa River is in serious danger of becoming what my banking friends call a "frozen asset".

On the other hand, if we are permitted to go on, what is the position? In the first place, we are hedged about with what I submit are the most complete set of safeguards in the national interest that have ever been devised in this country. In the second place, we are in the position where we cannot make a dollar unless and until we first contribute to the development of Canada this canal which will be of such inestimable benefit. In the third place, even if we fail, the public interest in Canada cannot possibly suffer loss or detriment. Pass our plans and give us a fair chance to complete our works, and we will certainly have no claim whatsoever against anybody in case we fail to complete the work on time. If we fail, we cannot block the river. We cannot take the river away with us. We cannot do anything to the detriment of the public interest, and anything we do build will be that much done, that much development accomplished, and to the extent of the work done, that much contributed to the development and total of the national assets.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion I wish to say, as my own opinion, that I believe that to any thinking man who studies this problem, to any thinking man who studies the problems of this great country, and considers the ameliorating effect which the cheap freight rates and economical access which would be afforded by this canal, to anyone who realizes what cheap transportation means, to anyone who knows what the development and use of power mean, to any such man it will be as it is to me.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that the spectacle of this Ottawa valley undeveloped, of this canal route unopened, of this great Ottawa River running ceaselessly to waste, is a great national tragedy, which should be ended by immediate development.

Mr. DUFF: Before you leave, Mr. Sifton, it has been stated here that if the Georgian Bay Canal is built, a great deal of Nova Scotia coal will find its way to the head of the lakes. Can you give the committee any particulars which, in your opinion, would mean the substitution of Nova Scotia and Welsh coal for United States coal, and will you also say if it is a fact that the British Empire

[Mr. Winfield Sifton.]