

*Supply—Northern Affairs*

indicated in the treaty is realistic, and for other reasons which I suppose are more familiar to the Minister of Justice than they are to me, because he has been concerned with these discussions with the province of British Columbia.

Mr. Chairman, all this surely proves that it is unwise for a federal government to sign a treaty of this kind until it has the precise approval of the province concerned to the details of that treaty, as was the case with the St. Lawrence waterway agreement. So far as we can gather on this side, that approval has not been obtained. That is no doubt why there has been delay in submitting the matter to the House of Commons, because quite clearly it would be futile and perhaps inappropriate to ask this house or a committee of this house to consider a treaty of this kind in the absence of agreement with the province directly concerned.

There are other considerations arising, it seems to me, in British Columbia, which have developed as this treaty is subjected to scrutiny and examination. There is the whole question of the relationship of this development to other power developments in that province, and the feeling in certain quarters of that province that if both developments—I am thinking about the Peace river development and the Columbia river development—go forward at the same time in the same decade this would be imprudent unless some assurance could be obtained that it will be possible to export some of the resulting power which may, in the eyes of some people, not be required by the province.

In the past we have had a good deal of experience of the dangers and the difficulties encountered when the question of the export of power from this country arises. The Liberal government has, in the past, taken steps to ensure that the interests of Canada are protected by legislation designed for that purpose. It is true, naturally, that any application for the export of power made by any corporation in any part of Canada would have to be considered. Indeed, the present government considered such an application in New Brunswick two or three years ago, and I think permits have been granted down there for the export of power on the understanding that it is to be recaptured when developments in New Brunswick require that power for provincial purposes.

We have learned in the past, however, that one has to be particularly careful about granting permits for the export of power of any kind, however carefully guarded the provisions might be with respect to recapturability, if I may use that word; because experience in the past has shown that when the time comes when you wish to get that

power back from the United States, obstacles are created which make such a course almost impossible.

Therefore, while it would be natural to consider any application for the export of power from British Columbia or any other province in the future, one would hope there would be no departure by any government in Canada from the policy which has been laid down in the past and, I think, accepted now by governments representing both parties; that the national interest with regard to power must be protected; that the national interest must be protected for a good many years ahead, and that no steps should be taken to export any power without every kind of assurance that the national interest is completely safeguarded.

These are some of the questions which have been raised in recent months in consideration of this whole matter. Our position is that we in this country should not have got ourselves into a situation where the federal government has signed a treaty and accepted an international obligation in signing that treaty before it was certain that it would have the co-operation of the provincial government concerned, without which co-operation the treaty cannot be carried out. The United States is not in this position. The treaty has been ratified down there and approved by the Senate, and they are very eager indeed, apparently, to proceed with it and are pressing hard, as we have learned in the last few days, for progress to be made by Canada. Such progress is not possible because the federal and provincial governments have not been able to get together in respect to the steps to be taken before this treaty can even be considered in this house.

We hope these difficulties can be resolved without delay, at least to the point where we can examine this treaty in parliament; where it can be submitted to the committee on external affairs where the doubts which have arisen in certain quarters about the feasibility, the advantage, of this treaty to Canada can be considered and where experts such as General McNaughton can be consulted. We would then be able to give these arrangements the careful scrutiny which their importance to Canada and to British Columbia in particular warrants. At that time, if that time comes, we shall have to make our position clear with regard to the advantages or otherwise of this treaty to Canada, if we are to approve it.

That time has not yet arrived, however, and the reason is that the federal government which signed this treaty in haste has not been able to work out arrangements with the province concerned, for lack of which the treaty cannot be implemented.