

state of Washington. What Seattle City Light does is propose to move on a 1942 International Joint Commission order, the validity of which is in serious question, to raise the Ross Dam on the American side of the Skagit River and flood about 15 miles of the Canadian Skagit. They have presumed to pay \$34,000 a year for the flooded land, but they will receive many millions of dollars of benefit in power.

I asked a question of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) on October 21. In view of the fact that the government of the province of British Columbia has now taken a reference to the International Joint Commission to seek redress in this matter, I asked the minister what steps the Government of Canada is taking to respond to the invitation of the International Joint Commission to put in submissions in support of the application of the province of British Columbia for a review of the order and the consequences of the proposed flooding.

At that time the Secretary of State for External Affairs said, and I quote:

Madam Speaker, the position of the government has been consistent; we believe this problem should be settled by negotiation. We have consistently offered our good offices to assist the province of British Columbia in that regard.

In effect, knowing almost nothing about this issue, the Secretary of State for External Affairs promised to do almost nothing. However, subsequent to that, in committee I had occasion to ask questions of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Simmons), and he chose to take a very belligerent view and to accuse the province of British Columbia of not being serious in its opposition to the flooding.

This is, of course, contrary to the facts—that is a problem the parliamentary secretary has had before. It is contrary to the facts because after 1972 two different governments of the province of British Columbia consistently to this day have actively and steadily opposed the flooding of this valley and have gone through protracted negotiations with Seattle City Light to find a solution.

As a consequence of the remarks of the parliamentary secretary the minister of the environment of British Columbia sent a telegram to the federal Minister of the Environment (Mr. Roberts) which said the following:

Greatly disturbed by press reports quoting Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Environment saying province of British Columbia not serious in negotiations regarding Skagit River and not keeping federal government informed.

If reports accurate this is in complete contradiction to facts. We have negotiated seriously and kept you informed at all stages. I must insist on retraction of inaccurate statements made by parliamentary secretary.

Happily, the Minister of the Environment for Canada responded immediately and contradicted completely his parliamentary secretary by stating in his telegram, and I quote:

In reply to your telegram let there be no repeat no misunderstanding that the federal government continues to oppose further flooding of Skagit Valley. We are aware of deep concern this issue poses for British Columbia and recognize your earlier efforts to resolve it. Be assured we support your efforts to have matter resolved. We are now reviewing your "request in application"—

### *Adjournment Debate*

That is the application to the International Joint Commission.

—which is before the International Joint Commission and will offer views on this matter to the commission. My department is fully prepared to meet with and co-operate with yours.

● (2215)

I should add that the British Columbia Minister of the Environment was pleased with that response but not happy with the activities of the parliamentary secretary, and he demanded a retraction. However, I should like to know whether the government can tell me tonight just what steps will be taken to support the application of British Columbia before the International Joint Commission, and whether the government can tell me if those representations will be made by the Department of the Environment alone or in conjunction with the Department of External Affairs.

I realize, of course, that the response of my friend, the Minister of the Environment, is inconsistent with the earlier statement of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, but I put that down to the good work which the Minister of the Environment did in persuading the Secretary of State for External Affairs that this was indeed too important a matter for the government to remain on the sidelines. As a consequence, I commend the Minister of the Environment for his response, but I would like to know tonight whether the department will be making submissions by itself or whether it will be supported by the Secretary of State for External Affairs with the full weight of the Canadian government behind him.

**Mr. Norman Kelly (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Supply and Services):** Mr. Speaker, during the question period on October 21, the hon. member opposite suggested that the government has changed its position on the Skagit Valley flooding. I wish to emphasize emphatically that this is not the case. Over the past decade, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), successive ministers of environment and other ministers and officials of the Canadian government have, on numerous occasions, taken the position that the environmental and recreational resources of this unique river valley were too important to be sacrificed to a power reservoir. This view was also embodied in unanimous House of Commons resolutions in 1973 and 1977.

However, we have also been conscious of the fact that in 1967 British Columbia signed a 99-year agreement with Seattle by which the province received compensation in return for the flooding, and that until 1973 British Columbia accepted this payment. The Canadian government, therefore, concluded that the most promising avenue for solution of this problem lay in a negotiated settlement involving these two parties. When direct negotiations between province and city began in 1974, the Canadian government made clear its willingness to render all possible assistance by way of good offices to promote such a settlement. We remain prepared to do so should conditions again appear favourable.