

Garrison Diversion

come to the province of Manitoba. The only thing we will accept, and I hope that the government sitting opposite listens to us, is that not one drop of North Dakota water from the Garrison diversion unit crosses the boundary into Manitoba. That is the only thing.

● (1720)

Miss Aideen Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the hon. member raised this important matter. The discussions are indeed at present at a critical level. It is an issue on which Canada's stand is supported by all parties in the House.

I should like to begin by restating once again the government's continuing, firm and unchanging position on the Garrison diversion project. The government is unalterably opposed to any transfer of water from the Missouri basin to the Hudson Bay basin which would involve the transfer of foreign biota, that is, foreign fish species, parasites or diseases. The government's position, which is supported by the findings of the International Joint Commission, is that any such transfer would have serious and totally unacceptable consequences for the people in the province of Manitoba.

The government has received a number of suggestions from other hon. members in the past on possible alternative approaches toward reaching the goal on which, I think, all members of the House are agreed. I am pleased to have the opportunity to review past endeavours and to bring hon. members up to date on the current state of negotiations.

Since April of 1969 the Government of Canada has made its concerns about the Garrison diversion unit known to the U.S. government in a number of official communications. In a note of October 23, 1973, the Government of Canada informed the Department of State of the continued grave concern of the Government of Canada over the project's potential implications for Canada, and its conclusion, based on studies conducted in both countries, that the proposed project would run counter to the obligations assumed by the United States under article IV of the Boundary Waters Treaty. Article IV states that:

—waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other.

The Government of Canada welcomed the assurances given in the reply U.S. note of February 5, 1974, that the United States:

—will comply with its obligations to Canada not to pollute water crossing the boundary to the injury of health or property within Canada. No construction potentially affecting waters flowing into Canada will be undertaken unless it is clear that this obligation will be met.

The governments of Canada and the United States subsequently asked the International Joint Commission on October 22, 1975, to undertake an impartial, binational investigation of the transboundary implications of the Garrison diversion unit, and to recommend such measures as might be taken to ensure that Canadian waters are not polluted to the injury of health and property. In so doing, the commission was asked specifically to consider the transboundary implications of the project

for water quality and water uses and the nature and extent of the impact on commercial and recreational fisheries in Manitoba of the possible introduction from the Missouri River system through the Garrison diversion unit of foreign biota.

When it became clear that the International Joint Commission could not complete its study before important scheduled budgetary decisions relating to construction of the Garrison diversion project were to be taken by United States authorities, the Government of Canada became concerned that these decisions might not be based on a full knowledge of the potential effects of such construction on Canada. Accordingly, on October 12, 1976, the Government of Canada requested:

—that further construction and decisions on construction of the Lonetree reservoir be deferred until after the commission's report has been received and subsequent consultations between the governments have taken place.

In making this request, the Government of Canada expressed particular concern that filling or operation of the reservoir could affect waters flowing into Canada.

In February of 1977, the U.S. government in its reply undertook that "a contract for the construction of the Lonetree dam will not be let until after the report to governments of the International Joint Commission has been received and subsequent consultations between the two governments have taken place."

Meanwhile, the International Joint Commission had established the International Garrison Diversion Study Board, composed of experts from both governments, to carry out the necessary technical studies for its investigation. The board reported in January of 1977 that:

—the Garrison diversion project as envisaged will have adverse impact on water uses in Canada.

The board projected a total annual loss to the commercial fisheries of Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba in the millions of dollars.

The International Joint Commission conducted public hearings to receive comment on the board's report. On the basis of the board's report, testimony received at its public hearings, and other submissions, the commission reported to governments on September 16, 1977.

The commission concluded that construction and operation of the Garrison diversion project as envisaged when the study began would cause significant injury to health and property in Canada as a result of adverse impacts on water quality and adverse and irreversible impacts on some of the more important biological resources in Manitoba. The commission recommended that portions of the project which could affect waters flowing into Canada not be built.

At that time it was understood by the Government of Canada that the U.S. Department of the Interior was preparing a modified Garrison plan which would take into consideration both the expressed Canadian concerns and the recommendations of the International Joint Commission.

A draft modified plan was published by the U.S. Department of the Interior in February of 1978. In the view of