

*Northern Canada Power Commission Act*

Speaking in a more general way on the subject opened up by the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding), to some extent the Parliamentary Secretary (Mr. Buchanan) when he opened this debate took a wide approach; he gave us the background of this legislation and the reasons for it. I want to ask the House to look at one aspect in the light of an amendment I propose to make—and I have now been driven to accept the established precedents. I hope the House will take note of what I have to say. As a northerner, I flew over that part of the country many years ago. I flew over Yellowknife when it was only a gleam in some prospector's eye; I have been down the river with judicial parties years and years ago and I know something of my hon. friend's aspirations and beliefs as to what may be accomplished in that country. We want to see proper development there, but because of one or two incidents which have been brought to our notice we want to make sure that the development which is brought about is one which can be brought about without harm or damage to the people of the country, to the ecology or to the orderly development of northern Canada.

I can indicate this best by relating it to one incident connected with the development of power in the north. I am free to do so because clause four of this bill provides that the Commission may investigate projects and advise the Commission of the Territories or of the Yukon of the areas which might be served. Under this heading, it is possible for any project for hydro electric power or power derived from the use of gas which may come down from the northern part of the Territories to be devised and put into effect. The bill provides carte blanche for this Commission to investigate and engage in almost any power project. We had an example of such a project which was not in the Territories precisely. As was said by the hon. member for Yukon, this Commission is interested in power projects outside the Territories and outside the north. I recall the project for the establishment of the Bennett Dam on the Peace River, a project which was referred to by the hon. member for Kootenay West in his speech yesterday. Anyone who knows the north knows that the Peace River and the Athabasca river systems join together to form the Slave River then flow into the Great Slave Lake and thence through the Mackenzie River into the Arctic. Up to about the 59th parallel of north latitude we find an extension of the great central plain of North America.

It is the only part of the North American continent where these rivers which are susceptible of the production of power also provide a means of transportation. There are in Russia three or four rivers which provide an equal and adequate service, but we have only one in this country. This whole issue was the subject of a discussion at Yellowknife early this year. It may well be that the Parliamentary Secretary was there when people prominent in public life, scientists and others interested in the north, gathered to discuss this among other issues. What about transportation into the north? What about the use of the rivers? What about the provision of power? How can it be done? How can it be safely and economically provided. One issue which was raised very

[Mr. Baldwin.]

strongly was: will it be necessary in the future, to come to a decision as to whether or not the waters of the Peace-Athabasca-Mackenzie system might well be dedicated both to the provision of transportation and also to the provision of power through hydroelectric projects. No decision was made on this, but it is an issue we shall have to face. Just today a question was asked about the establishment of a pipeline for the carriage of natural gas from the far north to the central part of this continent. So we are dealing with a major issue.

• (3:10 p.m.)

Therefore, I return to the point I started to make about the dangers that may be faced if the commission has to consider whether or not it should recommend to the government the construction of projects for the production of power. As I said, we have had a classic example of what can happen in connection with the Bennett dam on the Peace River. As the hon. member for Kootenay West, and I think also the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale), said yesterday, here was a situation where the province of British Columbia placed across the Peace River where it passes through the Rocky Mountains a gigantic earth dam for the production of power that would be taken down to the central and southern part of British Columbia, and possibly even to the United States. This dam was initiated in the beginning of 1963. It was because I was concerned about this construction, had been in the northern part of my province as well as the Northwest Territories, and had realized the relationship between the quantity of water that would be discharged into the Mackenzie system and the construction of the dam, that I started to ask some questions in this House.

I started asking questions shortly after the session commenced in June, 1963. I asked the Hon. Paul Martin, now government leader in the other place, who at that time as Secretary of State for External Affairs was greatly concerned with this project and attempting to arrange a tripartite agreement between the United States, Canada and British Columbia, the following question on June 5, 1963, as reported at page 673 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs arising out of a report he made to the house today on the negotiations with the government of British Columbia.

Did these discussions touch on the question of the application by the government of British Columbia or any authority of this government for approval under the navigable waters act of the Peace river dam project? If so, was any undertaking, conditional or otherwise, given to the premier of British Columbia?

With his classic capacity for uttering a great many words expressing very few thoughts, the minister replied:

As the hon. member will appreciate, while we are in the first stage of negotiations it would be undesirable as well as improper to deal with subjects which were or were not covered by the negotiations. I can say no more at this time.

I was still gullible enough to believe that the then Liberal government would be willing to answer my question, so I pursued the matter on June 14, when I asked the then Minister of Public Works, now the dis-