

Prairie Transmission Lines

the sake of what development there will be let us in the interests of the prestige of this House of Commons not be in too great a hurry to give away the resources we have at the present time. Let us stop, think and consider what the natural resources are which we have at our hands, and what we are going to do with them in the future, not for those of this day and generation but for those of the generations which are to come.

Mr. G. R. Parkes (Nanaimo): Mr. Speaker, I feel we are all indebted to the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) for giving us ample time to discuss these two important bills. They are of the greatest importance to the province from which I come, British Columbia. I venture to take a few moments of the time of the house because over a number of years I have had some personal connection with this natural product. I remember leaving the city of Edmonton over forty years ago when I was a youngster and travelling by stage coach to Athabasca landing. At Athabasca landing we got into Hudson bay scows and drifted down the Athabasca river. That is not the means of travel today. People wanting to go to the north country now travel in comfort by railway to Waterways, which used to be called Fort McMurray. In travelling by railway, however, they miss one of the most spectacular sights that can be seen in the northwest, namely, a great spout of flame coming from a gas well which, to my knowledge, was burning in 1909, and according to rumours amongst the Indians and the early inhabitants of that country had been burning for twenty years before that date. It was a most impressive sight. I saw it as a youngster for the first time, but it will remain fresh in my memory as long as I live.

That was my first introduction to the wonderful power of the natural gas which is available in the Northwest Territories and Alberta. I recall vividly visiting Medicine Hat. Towards the end of the last century gas had been discovered at Medicine Hat. Ranchers in that district found it possible to dig a small hole in the ground a few feet deep and find gases coming off which could be lighted by a match. Over these fires they were able to cook their midday and evening meals. They were able to fry their buffalo steaks, their eggs, or whatever it might be, with the natural gas coming up from the sands around Medicine Hat. In the course of the years it has been developed, and in the early years of the present century one could see prosperous industries being developed around Medicine Hat. I recall vividly the bottling works at Redcliff, the potteries in the vicinity of Medicine Hat, and the greenhouses in which

vegetables including tomatoes were grown in the early months of the year. That is an indication of what natural gas can do to help Canadian industries.

It was only a few years after that when they started to drill wells. Wells were drilled at Bow River and from there the gas was piped to Calgary. I lived in Calgary at the time. I have cooked and had my house heated by that natural product. As the years went by other gas wells were discovered in the Turner valley. Gas wells were drilled and developed at Viking not far to the east of Edmonton, and in recent years it has been piped from there into Edmonton and down as far as Red Deer. There is in fact a gap of only 100 miles between Calgary and Red Deer where the villages of Alberta are not supplied with natural gas and they do not have the opportunity of heating their homes by that means of providing warmth for their farm houses.

It is so different today. When I was in Red Deer we used to have to travel thirty miles by sleigh up towards Stettler, dig coal out of the river bank and haul it back to the farm at Red Deer in order to be able to keep warm during the winter months. With gas now piped to Red Deer there is no reason why all the homesteads and farms should not be heated by this very clean, efficient and economical means. I see the possibility of that type of power, heat and energy being delivered to the towns of the interior of British Columbia and the great metropolitan area of Vancouver and New Westminster.

So far as I can understand from the bill now before us, the proposal is that this means of providing comfort to countless homes in British Columbia is to be diverted across the border and carried to the states of the north-western United States. I suggest that, so far as we can see now, there is in the foreseeable future an unlimited quantity of gas in the great oil and gas fields of Alberta, the Peace river block and Pincher creek. I suggest it would be just as economical to pipe that supply from northern Alberta and the Peace river district down through central British Columbia feeding all the towns of the interior and carrying the gas to the city of Vancouver. In the same way that the industries I have described are carried on at Medicine Hat, the bottling plant, the potteries and the greenhouses, there is no reason why all along the central British Columbia route similar industries could not be carried on at innumerable little towns provided they can get this cheap form of heat.

[Mr. Harris (Danforth).]