

Mr. ROSS (Moose Jaw): Would it not be in order to get permission from the House to have the evidence taken down, first of all?

The CHAIRMAN: That is being done now.

Mr. CHEVRIER: Subject to objection.

The CHAIRMAN: What is your pleasure in regard to Mr. Blatchford's motion?

Motion agreed to.

Mr. HARRY SIFTON: Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

In addressing the committee on this subject, I do so with a certain amount of nervousness, not because I have any doubts as to the merits of our case, but because this is the first time I have ever appeared before a committee. I was greatly pleased, as one of the citizens of Canada, to see the speed with which you do business in this committee, and I would like to suggest that, if you are going to carry on at that speed throughout the whole morning, you do it on our side rather than on the other.

I am going to endeavour to place before you gentlemen what I consider the important facts surrounding the Georgian Bay Canal enterprise. After all, we are all here to settle a very important problem. There has been a great deal of discussion of various kinds, but the main feature which has emerged from the discussions in the newspapers and on the floor of the House, is that it is really a very important question to solve, and it is no solution to walk away and leave it where it is. It is better to settle it at the time it arises, and it is for that reason I have asked permission to address the committee on the general aims and objects of the promoters of the Bill, and whatever objection there is and whatever good points there may be.

Now, the Georgian Bay Canal Bill is a bill to extend certain clauses of a charter to construct a canal from the Georgian Bay to Montreal. Perhaps I may be permitted to say that apparently there is some difference of opinion on that point in the House, but, as a matter of fact, the main point of the company, if they do anything, is to construct a canal from Georgian Bay to Montreal. Certain clauses in the charter deal with water-powers which are incidentally made possible to develop through the work being done on the river in the construction of that canal, but the water-powers referred to in those clauses are water-powers which can only be developed on account of the head of water being created through the construction of dams across the river, and therefore, they are subsidiary to and contingent upon the construction of the canal. This is the spirit of the charter. The promoters acknowledge the spirit of the charter; they recognize—and I might perhaps say this to settle it once and for all—that they have no right whatever to turn this charter into a great power company without investing any money in canalization. They recognize that is not the spirit of the charter. They recognize—and I am of the opinion—that they have no legal right to do so. However, to clarify that point, I think three or four amendments might possibly be made which would be acceptable to the promoters. The first amendment does not add anything to the charter, but it may clear up certain suspicions which some people might have. The first amendment would be an amendment which would prohibit the shareholders and promoters from profiting to the extent of one dollar from the operations of the business until the canalization and navigation had been completed, from the far end of the canal at Georgian Bay to Montreal. All the assets they might have, and all their activities would have to be dedicated to the construction of this canal and the improvement of it, from one end to the other, before any profits could be taken by the shareholders or promoters of this canal. This would preclude the possibility of anybody taking over the water power, without any return

[Mr. Harry Sifton.]