

Supply—Northern Affairs

to the attention of the minister and his officials because it appears as though this action in the province of Alberta may be of some significance. While I do not oppose this suggestion I urge that a most careful and detailed examination should be made by this government before its adoption is considered. We can ill afford to be deprived of these areas to which our people must resort for recreational purposes.

Mr. Denis: I should like to say just a word in disagreement with my hon. friend from Bonavista-Twillingate who said that the minister of northern affairs should be called the minister of publicity.

Mr. Pickersgill: The former minister.

Mr. Denis: I wish to defend the minister, and I do so on the grounds that this title belongs to the Postmaster General and has done so for a long time.

Mr. Pickersgill: I apologize to my hon. friend. He is quite right.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I do not rise to prolong this discussion. I wish to raise another matter. I would simply like to say that when we talk about our interest in the northern regions of Canada it will be difficult to contest the statement of record as given my hon. friend from Bonavista-Twillingate.

There is no doubt that it was under the administration of Mr. St. Laurent that a separate department of northern affairs was established under the responsibility of the present premier of Quebec. It is also well known that the former prime minister indicated his own very deep interest in northern development by observations made in this house on a number of occasions while he was prime minister. Those of us who served with him in government know that he, perhaps more than any other living Canadian, deserves to be regarded as the statesman who gave emphasis to the importance of the development of the northern regions of our country. It will be difficult to contest that both Mr. St. Laurent as prime minister and Mr. Lesage as the first minister in charge of the department took a deep interest in the development of this part of the country.

As minister of national health and welfare I knew a good deal about the initiative which was taken by Mr. Lesage. As my hon. friend knows, much of the development had to do with some very important decisions which were taken at that time with regard to northern health services as administered by the Department of National Health and Welfare. When we are talking about those to whom credit should be given it would be difficult to deny the contributions made

[Mr. Baldwin.]

by Dr. Percy Moore. That was all under a regime other than the present one.

Mr. Graftey: Would the hon. member permit a question? I ask this question in all sincerity. Would the hon. member who has just mentioned Mr. Lesage reconcile Mr. Lesage's present position in relation to the power grid program in the meeting of provincial premiers with the position he took when he occupied the portfolio of northern affairs?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): If I were to answer that question I would, of course, be out of order just as my hon. friend was in putting the question.

Mr. Pigeon: The hon. member has unanimous consent to answer.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The fact is that I think it is generally recognized that Mr. Lesage did play an important part as minister of northern affairs in pursuing policies of the administration of which he was a member, and *Hansard* of that period will attest to what I have said. I can say as one of his colleagues there is no one—

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Chairman, may I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Martin (Essex East):—in my judgment since who has shown such a responsible understanding—I do not say a propaganda understanding and I am not referring to the present minister—in administering northern affairs. I am sure there was no one who had as vigorous, and intelligent an interest in the problems of that department as did the present premier of Quebec. That is a matter of record.

Mr. Nielsen: May I ask the hon. member a question on that point?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Yes.

Mr. Nielsen: If what the hon. member is saying is an accurate reflection of the attitude of the head of the department at that time perhaps the hon. member could inform the committee why Mr. Lesage and his colleagues in the cabinet at that time consistently turned down proposals for bridges and roads in the north? There is an obvious discrepancy which I who lived there am conscious of because I witnessed this complete lack of development.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Usually my hon. friend asks very intelligent questions but I am sure he will agree this is hardly one.

Mr. Nielsen: But I should like an answer.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Let me say that the government of which I was a modest and