

Columbia River Treaty

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): I must advise the house that if the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) speaks now he will close the debate.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker,—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): The hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Cooper).

Mr. C. O. Cooper (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words in this debate having regard to the fact that we on the prairies need water from the Rocky mountains. Other speakers have dealt with the water problems of the prairies. I have been vice president of the Saskatchewan river development association since 1943 and we have always had it in the back of our minds that we would have to divert water from the slopes of the Rocky mountains in order to maintain our water supply on the prairies.

I can remember that a few years ago water was rationed in the thriving cities of Moose Jaw and Regina. If you used municipal water to wash your car or water your lawn there was a penalty imposed. We have had these experiences on the prairies, and in the last 40 years I have seen the water level going down every year. Lakes and streams where we used to hunt ducks and which were also used for water supply have dried up and in many cases farming is being carried on in those locations today. So we must look to other sources for water.

I am all in favour of water conservation by dams, dugouts and every other means that will conserve water in Canada. So far as diversion is concerned I agree with what the hon. member who just spoke said with regard to the treaty. I object to the rider providing that we can use the water for domestic purposes and so on but not for hydroelectric purposes. So far as the South Saskatchewan river project is concerned, we expect to divert some water from the Columbia into the South Saskatchewan river and when that project is completed next year we will have a hydroelectric plant developing 475 million kilowatt hours annually. What I am afraid will happen with this rider in the treaty is that when we want to divert water in 10 or 20 years the United States will say that under the treaty water is not to be diverted for power purposes. That is the main objection I have to the treaty and I conclude by saying that I cannot support the treaty with that rider in it.

[Mr. Douglas.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): Order. Once again I must warn the house that if the Secretary of State for External Affairs speaks now he will close the debate.

Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, at one point in this debate, one hon. member observed that this was one of the most important matters to come before the house in a long time. With that I fully agree. It was for this reason that, after the most careful examination had been made of the project by two governments of Canada the matter none the less was referred to the committee on external affairs for further examination by the membership of the house. At the same time the committee had the opportunity of inviting the presentation of expert testimony by people with special technical knowledge both in and outside the government service of Canada and the government service of the province of British Columbia.

There has been an exhaustive inquiry. Fifty meetings of the committee were held and I attended many of those meetings, although I was not a member of the committee myself. After a long period of service in this house, I must say that I am sure we have not had in many years a committee that addressed itself so thoroughly to its particular assignment as did this committee. This was due to the earnest way in which members in all parties applied themselves to the difficult task given to them. What I say applies to those on the government side, to those in the opposition parties who support the treaty and the protocol and in equal measure to those who were and continue to be opposed to the treaty and the protocol.

After we came into office a year ago I had the responsibility as Secretary of State for External Affairs of negotiating the protocol with the United States. This is a vital matter, and I do not think we prove the point by having it suggested that only those opposed to the treaty or the protocol really have the national interest in mind. I am sure that every member of the committee and every member of this house, regardless of the position he takes on this matter, is as concerned about the propriety, validity and integrity of this project as any other hon. member. If I may say so to the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas), I find it a little difficult to accept some of the direct and indirect implications of his remarks. Usually he does not let himself go in this way, and I can only assume that there