

Secretary of State for External Affairs. As reported at page 1000 of *Hansard*, he said:

Mr. Speaker, on January 9, a note was sent to the United States authorities requesting discussions on this question. This is the procedure that has been approved by both the government of the province of British Columbia and of course by this government. It seems to us the most effective way of getting action.

I would like to know what the response to that note has been, Mr. Speaker. I think most hon. members of this House, and certainly the public, want to know whether the Canadian government has in fact said to the American government that there will be no flooding, and whether the American government has agreed, either by implication or directly, with representatives of the Canadian government that the flooding will not take place.

While I do not doubt the sincerity of the assurances given in this House, I would hope that our proper acceptance of the sincerity of this statement does not lead us on this side of the House, or any member of the government, into a position where the wishful thinking of several months ago is leading us into a situation where we may not be as secure as we thought we were. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of the Environment to advise us tonight of the real situation of the agreement between Canada and the United States that this flooding will not proceed.

I would also like to know whether the government of Canada has received a copy of the letter that I quoted or a similar letter, or whether the government of the province of British Columbia has communicated the contents of that letter to the federal government. With regard to whether the federal government has received it, I think it would be beneficial to know whether the federal government would be prepared to assist financially if it should occur that the Ross group had to make representations at the hearing. I think my time is up, Mr. Speaker. I would appreciate the minister dealing with the matters raised.

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the questions raised by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser), I would say the following. The Canadian government and the government of British Columbia, both separately and jointly, have said that the flooding of the Skagit valley in British Columbia will not take place. This message, loud and clear, has been transmitted to Washington. It is a message which has been received there with concern.

We have now had a reply from the United States State Department officials. They agree, in principle, to the convening of a meeting or a series of meetings with the two principle parties with a view to terminating a long-standing contract. The two principal parties are the Seattle City Light Company, owned by the people of the city of Seattle, in the United States, and the government of the province of British Columbia, in Canada.

The date of the meeting between the four parties, the two principal parties, Seattle City Light and the government of British Columbia, and the United States Department of State, and External Affairs, supported by the Department of the Environment for Canada, has not been set. It is expected, however, that it will be some time within the next month. This is a matter which I will be taking up on Monday, April 9, with Mr. Russell Train,

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chairman of President Nixon's environmental council, when he comes to Ottawa to discuss this and other matters.

The United States State Department raised the matter with Premier Barrett when he was in Washington recently. He agreed, to explore several possibilities originating with Seattle City Light, one of which was the supply of power from British Columbia in lieu of the power that would have otherwise have been generated by the Ross dam in the United States, the reservoir of which would have flooded back into Canada.

As I understand it, Mr. Barrett's response was one of interest but not of final commitment. I understand Seattle City Light has since been in touch with the British Columbia hydro authority with a view to negotiating an export of power from Canada in lieu of power which would otherwise have been generated in the United States from Canadian water flowing down the Skagit valley.

The hon. member for Vancouver South asked about the Ross group. I think the Ross group is right in not spending too much time and money preparing a brief in opposition to the flooding. It should nevertheless continue its watching brief. As I understand it, Seattle City Light is scheduled to appear before the U.S. Federal Power Commission. The date has been put off an additional number of months to December, 1973. Hopefully, long before those hearings begin and long before it would be necessary for Canada and British Columbia otherwise to intervene in those hearings, there will be meaningful negotiation between Seattle City Light and British Columbia which will terminate this threat of flooding in the Skagit valley forever.

• (2210)

FISHERIES—FRESHWATER FISH MARKETING CORPORATION—INVESTIGATION BY STANDING COMMITTEE OF OPERATIONS AND DISMISSAL OF EMPLOYEES

Mr. Doug Rowland (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can begin by presenting some background. On January 11, 1973, I learned of large lay-offs at the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation's new Transcona plant. Accordingly on January 12, under the provisions of Standing Order 43, I asked the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion on the grounds of urgent and pressing necessity, and as an explanation I provided the following information:

Yesterday the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation announced large lay-offs of personnel in their Winnipeg and Selkirk plants. This action follows radical alterations in the marketing procedures pursued by the Corporation, the dismissal or resignation of significant numbers of the Corporation's most senior staff, allegations that the Corporation is running a huge deficit and allegations that a part of the inventory of fish of the Corporation cannot be accounted for . . . I therefore move:

That the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry be immediately established and that the entire matter of the administration and operations of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation be referred to it for investigation and report.

Unanimous consent was not granted. Therefore, on January 19 I asked the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis) the following question in the House:

In the light of recent events associated with the Freshwater Fish