

Supply—Northern Affairs

and not proceed with the signing of the treaty; because it looks to me as if the Prime Minister was most anxious and in great haste to sign this treaty with the Eisenhower government, either because the Eisenhower government was about to retire or because he was anxious to hail this as one of the greatest international projects ever signed between Canada and the United States.

In any event, the Prime Minister probably thought that he should go on with the wedding even though the bride was not there. My purpose in rising a second time is to ask the minister why the government did not, in the light of the letter which it had received, turn back and start negotiations anew with the province of British Columbia toward the end of obtaining a firm agreement.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, I informed the committee a few moments ago that when that letter reached Ottawa the Prime Minister was already en route to Washington for the purpose of signing that treaty in accordance with arrangements made prior to that date to the knowledge of all of the parties, including the government of British Columbia.

If the hon. member will refresh his memory by referring to the terms of that letter, I think he will concur in the view that the Canadian government took, that that letter could not be accepted as a change in the course of agreement and understanding between the governments of Canada and British Columbia which had led up to that agreement and the preparations for the signing of the treaty, understandings that had been embodied in the terms of the treaty, for the signing of which arrangements had already then been made.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that the minister is being very naive when he says that. Why on earth did the premier of British Columbia write this letter, obviously indicating that he was not satisfied, if he really was satisfied? It is just ridiculous.

The hon. member for Laurier said that the Prime Minister went through the wedding without the bride. That is one way of putting it. Another way is that the Prime Minister was attempting to play Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark, and what a Prince of Denmark Mr. Bennett has turned out to be.

Mr. Chevrier: There are one or two other matters that I think should engage the attention of the committee.

Mr. Graftey: "To be, or not to be".

Mr. Pickersgill: Yes, "To be, or not to be".

Mr. Chevrier: I should like to ask the minister, what is the view of the federal government with reference to the export of power?

[Mr. Chevrier.]

Has the view of the federal government changed in that respect. If I remember aright statements that were made from time to time by the Minister of Justice, I believe, and perhaps by the Minister of Finance—I am not too sure—certainly outside the house, if not within the house, that there was at the beginning some serious objection being taken by the present government to the export of power. That now seems to have been amended in some respect by statements that I have seen. I wonder whether the minister would care to comment on the view of the federal government at the present time with reference to the export of power.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, the view of the present government is well known and has been clearly stated. The house dealt with legislation on this very subject three years ago and it made provision, in establishing the national energy board, for review by that board of applications for permits to export various forms of energy, including electric power. Various applications under the terms of that legislation have been heard by the board and have been approved, and the governor in council has given approval to various of those applications involving the export of power.

Mr. Chevrier: May I ask the minister whether he has a secret agreement with the premier of British Columbia which will not be disclosed until after the election?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): There is no secret agreement that I am aware of.

Mr. Pickersgill: Is there any agreement, secret or otherwise?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, the federal government is applying its best efforts to achieve agreement in order to get this great and beneficial undertaking launched.

Mr. Chevrier: Is it the intention of the government, in relation to the last but one answer which the minister gave, that with reference to the export of power each application for the export of power will be dealt with on its merits?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Of course, Mr. Chairman, that is the duty of the board under the statute, to deal with each application on its merits.

The Deputy Chairman: Shall vote 729 carry?

Mr. Pickersgill: No.

Mr. Herridge: Five o'clock.