

International Rivers

Mr. Byrne: How much money have they put into the Columbia basin survey?

Mr. Hansell: You would not know; you tell us.

Mr. Byrne: The federal government put in \$4 million for study.

Mr. Thomas: That is fine, and it shows once more the common sense of the British Columbia government; because they have been using the surveys carried out by the federal government to give themselves a source of revenue that otherwise they would not have had. They are simply taking advantage of the \$4 million that the hon. member says the federal government has spent. And do not think we do not appreciate the fact that they did spend it. But what is the use of having a survey, if you do not take advantage of it? And that is exactly what the British Columbia government is doing.

And you should remember this, too, that when the Mica creek project is carried out at some time in the future—probably it will not be for another 10 or 15 years at least—the need for the low-level dam at Castlegar will be ended. But we still have a 50-year contract worth a million dollars a year because the Kaiser corporation needs the power now. And if we are going to sit back and wait for the Mica creek project to become a reality, we are going to lose several millions of dollars during that period of waiting.

But apparently that is what the federal government wants. Yesterday the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources denied that there was any political interference; and then he spent about 15 minutes—ineffectually I might say—in an attempt to tear down the British Columbia government, at the same time making what I considered was an inconsistent and emotional appeal, rather than one stating facts.

Mr. Byrne: What about the Social Crediters in the House of Commons?

Mr. Thomas: Apparently the Social Crediters in the House of Commons have you tied up so badly that you have to interject all the time. You could not prove your point yesterday.

Mr. Byrne: You are not proving it today.

Mr. Thomas: And you cannot prove it now.

An hon. Member: He can't prove anything.

Mr. Thomas: Now we come to the main point, where the government says that anything in the national interest is going to be protected by the federal government. Well, I have heard that so often it is quite apparent to me that what they consider to

[Mr. Thomas.]

be in the national interest is something that would be in the interests of the government of Canada, and more particularly of the Liberal party. It has nothing to do with the welfare of Canada, at all. If this project is of such great national importance, as indicated by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe), then why have the only members taking part in the debate been those from British Columbia and Alberta—that is, with the exception of one weak and faint-hearted effort by an hon. member from New Brunswick.

The government says: Oh, we are unwilling to give any grants for educational aid to the provinces because in some small way we might interfere with provincial autonomy. That is a weak argument—when they are willing to walk all over a province in order to do something to justify their own desires. They are afraid that the Social Credit government of British Columbia might be given credit for making a good deal with the Kaiser corporation, and they are trying to prevent the province from getting that credit. This government tried the same tactics in Alberta, but it failed.

Yesterday the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Philpott) accused us of talking blue ruin all the time. Well, the Liberal party in Alberta has been yelling blue ruin for 20 years. In spite of all these yells of blue ruin in Alberta we have progressed to the point, through the policies of the provincial government, that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) in another debate the other day rose in his place and asked whether the provincial government of Alberta would be in need of this assistance from the federal government. Apparently he thought we were too well off to need that assistance. That is how far we have gone behind, and it shows the absolute untruth of the cries of blue ruin and lack of integrity and the lack of ability of the Social Credit government, that they have not been able to succeed and they will not be able to succeed in British Columbia.

In speaking on this measure the other day, the Minister of Trade and Commerce named specifically the Columbia river basin and the Milk river in Alberta. When questioned he said he did not think the Saint John river was applicable to this legislation. Apparently, the minister is not too familiar with his geography, because he forgets that the west branch of the Saint John river rises in the province of Quebec, flows through the state of Maine and back up into the east branch of the Saint John to form the international boundary between Maine and New Brunswick. Therefore, there definitely is an application so far as the Saint John river is