

Northern Canada Power Commission Act

think you will get complete uniformity throughout. It might be very difficult to apply rates evenly across the entire area. I have looked at one of these reports and I can see nothing wrong with government subsidization. For example, the government has subsidized some of the coal used in coal-fired plants and this has helped reduce the end cost of the product—in this case, the cost of the electricity produced and supplied to residents. Something of this sort could be done for those living in the remote areas.

However, let me make it clear that I do not think the private utility companies are going to be a sort of fairy godmother to people in the north in regard to bringing power to remote areas. I was a member of the provincial House in British Columbia for a number of years. We fought for some time to try and force the private utility companies to put lines through some of the rural sections of the province, but they refused to do so. We carried on the fight before the public utilities commission, before the B.C. legislature and in the press. We held meetings and put all the pressure we could on the private companies. In many cases people had been living for generations without the enjoyment of the amenities of electricity, something they should have had. Public power finally did the job. I think the same pattern will emerge in the north.

For this reason I think the Northern Canada Power Commission could do an immensely good job of assisting such areas to obtain power at an average or moderate cost. I do not think these people should be called upon to pay high prices for electricity. If necessary, I think the government of Canada should not hesitate to give residents living in such areas large subsidies to help keep rates down. I think we owe this to these residents.

I should like to say a few words about power in northern areas. I feel not enough planning has been done in regard to power projects and other economic developments in the north. Generally speaking, to date the north has proved to be a huge treasure house of raw materials. Mining companies have moved into the north and set up operation. Unfortunately, we have witnessed all this raw material being shipped out of the area for processing. It is here that I suggest planning be done. The power commission should sit down with officials from other government departments and discuss steps to be taken to bring about more fabrication, more processing, of the raw materials that are presently being taken out of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. This processing should be done in the north where the raw materials are found.

Mr. Nielsen: Such as smelting.

Mr. Harding: Yes, smelting and processes like that. That is what the north needs. Such a development would be based upon huge quantities of power being made available to the smelters, the concentrators and so on. I understand there are some concentrators in the north now, but I am sure other industries would also spring up.

[Mr. Harding.]

This is the kind of planning that should be provided for in a bill such as this or in some other type of legislation.

We must concern ourselves with what we will do for the people in the north. We talk about the Indians and the Eskimos who also live in the north, but alongside the Indians and Eskimos are a large number of other people who have gone north because they enjoy tough conditions and the type of life there. We must learn to develop the Canadian north economically. To do so we will require huge quantities of power which will have to be subsidized. As I say, we must first plan how we are to develop the north. In this regard, it is time the government laid down some guidelines. For example, the province of Ontario is insisting that a certain amount of processing of raw materials take place before those materials are allowed to leave the province. I see no reason why areas of the north should not enjoy some of the prosperity that comes from this type of economic development, though it is economic development in its very first stages. I urge the minister and his departments take another look at this problem.

I notice in the last report that there has been a considerable increase in electrical power consumption in the north. There has been a 10.1 per cent increase in electric power consumption and a 6.6 per cent increase in consumption of power for heating purposes.

Mr. Nielsen: There has been a 100 per cent increase in Whitehorse.

Mr. Harding: The hon. member for Yukon says there has been a 100 per cent increase in Whitehorse. This is an indication that people are using and want more power, and that the population of the north is growing. As I say, the north is one of the few remaining treasure houses of the world. With proper planning we can make certain it is adequately developed.

One last matter in conclusion. I do not think we should always think of power in terms of diesel or hydro generation. There are gasfields in the north and gas is one of the cheapest and best sources of power. Eventually there will be a number of localities in the north where power will be generated by gas turbines—turbines might be used in some areas even now—fed by the natural gas that is found there in abundance.

One hon. member made reference to the oil and gaslines that might eventually come down along the Mackenzie River to Edmonton and be dispersed to other parts of Canada, and possibly even further south. Again, I believe we cannot leave this entirely to free enterprise. The government must make certain that there are proper plans regarding gas and oil distribution. This is another essential factor as far as development in the north is concerned.

● (5:50 p.m.)

There may be someone else who wants to say a few words on this rather interesting bill. In closing, I should