

Columbia River Treaty

I believe that the treaty in its original form, and now supplemented by the protocol, provides a basis upon which the development of the Columbia in Canada can take place to the advantage of Canadians in general and the people of British Columbia in particular. I believe the opportunity is presented to us now to realize the dreams of half a century. I believe that the treaty should be ratified. I believe that as time goes on the wisdom of this decision will make itself more and more apparent.

I also realize, of course, that all of us who are interested in this project must maintain our vigilance to see that those people whose lives will be at least temporarily disrupted by this great development will not suffer as a consequence of the benefits conferred on other citizens. Provided this is done, I am sure that the benefits will far outweigh the temporary inconveniences of change. But because change is inevitable, because change is a fundamental factor in any development of the Columbia, we must accept that fact and now proceed with the ratification of the treaty which will not only bring about these changes but will confer benefits on the province really too great for us to contemplate or endeavour to measure at this time.

There will still be opposition. There will still be objection. I do not believe this could have been avoided under any scheme of development. This scheme, as envisaged in the treaty, represents the work of a great many dedicated public servants and political leaders. I feel that it will confer the benefits that British Columbia and Canada seek. I trust the resolution will receive the approval of the house.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say at the very outset that we propose to oppose this resolution with all the vigour and determination that we can muster. We are under no delusion whatever about the fact that the decision has already been made, although it has not yet been registered. It is our belief that although to some people it would appear to be an exercise in futility to oppose that which is inevitable, nevertheless we believe that even if we stand alone in this house it is in the interests of Canada that opposition to this treaty be expressed, and that our objections be now heard.

It may well be that the reason there are so few members in the house at the present time and so few representatives in the press

gallery, when we are dealing with a treaty which in its significance far outweighs 99 per cent of the matters which come before this house, is that there is a feeling of inevitability. The government has spoken. The government has said that this treaty will be passed in this form. After all, this treaty contains, in our view, only very minor changes from the treaty approved by the former administration. Perhaps it is because there is an atmosphere of inevitability that, when we are asked in this parliament to perform the solemn act of approving, of ratifying a treaty of such tremendous significance to Canada, there are so few apparently concerned enough to be here to deal with this matter.

So far as we are concerned, Mr. Speaker, it is our hope that if we point out as clearly as we know how what we believe to be the serious errors in judgment contained in this treaty, perhaps they will not be repeated in the future. An awareness of what we, and any other individual Canadians believe to be the defects of this treaty may help to insure that in the future the interests of Canada will be safeguarded more effectively than we believe they are in the present treaty.

To some members in this house, it may seem strange that our party which has a very large, and if I may say so, a very capable representation from British Columbia, should have as its first spokesman on this treaty dealing with a river that runs through the province of British Columbia, a member from eastern Canada. Perhaps this is symbolic of our conviction that the Columbia river treaty affects national as well as provincial interests and deserves the most careful scrutiny of every member in this house, because it concerns every Canadian.

I speak as one who tried to follow carefully the evidence before the external affairs committee, and it is our conviction that, in the words of a very distinguished Canadian, this treaty is a very bad treaty for Canada, and parliament should know it. I am quoting the words of General McNaughton who, I suggest, is not only a very distinguished Canadian but better qualified to express an opinion on this treaty than any other Canadian. It is true, I suppose, that those who listen to evidence pick out those things that suit their preconceived views. Nevertheless, I say that, having listened to the evidence, we endorse, support and accept that characterization of the treaty, that it is a very bad treaty for Canada.

It may well be, Mr. Speaker, that the provisions of this treaty, which extend into the