

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

pulp were our major resources, but now we see that our fresh water is even more valuable. Our thousands of unpolluted lakes, streams and rivers are viewed with envy by many, particularly our neighbour to the south.

I am asking the government to lift the veil of secrecy which surrounds this study. Let the people of Canada in on those plans and proposals which will affect them so significantly. We in northwestern Ontario have plans and proposals for our economic development which may be restricted or helped by a water diversion program. I ask the government to consult with us. I ask them to practise participatory democracy, to take us into their confidence. Let them cast some light on the subject and thereby remove so much of the uncertainty, anxiety and apprehension that we feel when we contemplate the overwhelming alterations that are going to be made to our landscape.

Continually, my constituents are wanting to know what all this activity in northern Ontario is directed to and what is involved in all these hydrographic studies. We are asking the government to assure us that our national sovereignty is not in jeopardy. Show us that conservation and concern for nature is part of this over-all proposal.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, some days ago the hon. member for Thunder Bay (Mr. Penner) first raised the question of the diversion for export of water from northern Ontario in a way which revealed that those in his part of the country are deeply concerned about the issue of water. Water, of course, is a most important resource and it is our experience in this country that our people are very concerned

about this resource, about plans and discussions pertaining to its use, and how they will be affected by that use, particularly when water is to be diverted for export. I think the hon. member for Thunder Bay has done a great service to his constituents by raising this matter in order that this issue and the nature of the study now under way can be discussed, and in order that the fears of his constituents may be put aside.

The studies under way, of course, are exercises in analyzing the nature of the resources in question and what can conceivably be done with them. It is a most difficult problem to consider and it is most difficult for the government to study all the factors tied to the use of water and all questions arising from the effects of water diversion.

The hon. member mentioned problems relating to timber, wildlife and general ecological circumstances that would prevail in the area in the event of a diversion. I wish to assure him, and the people of the watershed being studied, that before any question of diversion or export arises the fullest kind of consultation with the people of the area and the people of this country generally will take place. The full effects and impacts of any decisions will be thoroughly examined. I assure the hon. member and the people of his area that these are merely technical studies into questions of costs and possibilities, and that they in no way indicate that any decision has been taken by government; nor do they indicate what will be or should be done. Before any decision can be taken all aspects of the matter so eloquently referred to must undergo a great deal of further examination.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 10.30 p.m.
