

put in the words "the executive council of the respective legislatures of the territories". If we did that, we would have economic control. You just have to touch base with the executive committees of the legislatures. You would keep your hand on them to that degree without interfering with their efficiency. I do not apologize for taking the time of the House because this is a very important question of principle.

I now want to discuss subsection 6(2). Once again I am horrified at the thought that this should be taken out. With all the publicity, squealing, yelling and uproar we have had over James Bay, the MacKenzie Valley pipeline, and the development of the Churchill River in Manitoba, where in each case independent bodies have moved without considering the whole picture, I thought the government would have started to learn. What am I talking about? Subsection 6(2) is one of the great defences the people have over the use of water in Canada. It ensures that water is not abused, spoiled or misused by anybody. I am referring to the powers of the Dominion Water Power Act.

Every province has a water act. We would not expect the British Columbia Hydro Corporation, an independent Crown corporation in B.C., to dam a river as it saw fit just to generate power. It has to go before a water licensing board in the province and get the authority, and this means considering the interests of all the people who use the water of that river.

● (1650)

Here we are dealing with one of the oldest rights in the history of man. The history of the law concerning water use goes back beyond 2,000 years. These ancient riparian laws never fail to provide for the protection of all those who live on the banks of a river. Yet here is an infringement of one of the oldest laws in history, a law going back more than 2,000 years before Christ, observed in the Middle East, brought to Europe and codified first in Roman law and then in Frankish law. Yet today parliament is being asked to throw out water legislation and transfer authority to those who are interested only in the power which can be generated from river flows.

One does not abandon these controls simply to make one aspect of our lives more efficient. After all, they are designed to protect the public interest. Until this parliament can put a territorial water act in place which makes it necessary for every commercial enterprise, whether owned by a private company or a Crown corporation, to go before a board and ask for a licence to use water, I think we should hang on to every shred of control we have over power corporations.

Power corporations in every province over and over again have forgotten the interests of the people on the banks of the rivers they utilize. A power man tends to think only in terms of power while ignoring all the other uses—recreation, flood control, timber production, the whole ecology of the region—as well as less material aspects. Such considerations do not enter the mind of a power man. He only wants to know how cheaply he can build a dam to get the amount of power out of a river that he requires. After all, that is all he is supposed to do. I

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wonder how many hon. members have seen the logs floating on Lake Bennett.

I think every member of the House should be ashamed to support this type of amendment, an amendment which asks parliament to get rid of one of the control mechanisms used to safeguard the rivers of the Northwest Territories and of the Yukon.

I hope the minister will reconsider the clause in this bill which says that these subsections (2) and (3) of the act should be repealed. I suggest we leave them as they are until the territorial governments can enact their own legislation to protect water rights in the territories. I suggest that in 6(3) the minister simply put in the words "executive committee of the respective territorial governments" by way of amendment. This would achieve what the hon. member for the Yukon and what the hon. member for the Northwest Territories are seeking to do. At the same time such a decision would be in harmony with a principle which I believe every hon. member supports, namely, that parliament should not be reduced to nothing, that we should possess some means of controlling these corporations while, at the same time, giving a little more authority to the people who live in the territories concerned.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the eloquence and the wisdom of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton). If I can do anything in the time available to me now I should like to support the suggestion he made with respect to where the residual influence ought to lie in the area covered by this amendment, namely, that it should rest with territorial governments.

I share the concern expressed by my hon. friend. It is one which is felt by a great many members of parliament, as well as by those who are observers of the parliamentary process with respect to a process which is taking place to a greater and greater extent. To anyone who shares the conviction that there is an innate wisdom in our parliamentary system, the proliferation of commissions, boards and agencies which are independent of parliament must be a matter for great regret. I do not speak this afternoon in any partisan way; I do not think this aspect of the bill is a partisan matter. It is a parliamentary matter.

The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), and the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) whose anniversary we celebrate today, have devoted a great part of their lives to the preservation and enhancement of parliament. If there is anything which is unique with respect to the parliamentary system, apart from the whole issue of responsible government, it is the authority parliament ought to exercise over decisions affecting the people of the country.

Every time the House moves to satisfy the appetite of efficiency, every time it sets aside its rights to control, the parliamentary system suffers. A few moments ago the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain drew attention to the difficulty this can create for ministers. One of those ministers is in the House today.

Every time a minister has to get up and say parliament saw fit to give this responsibility to such and such a