

Natural Resources—Development

territory. At that time the minister kept saying that we cannot do this, that it would not be economic and gave all kinds of reasons why these things could not be done. But last year I was glad to see that they had paid some attention to what we on this side had said and were beginning to talk about building roads, were beginning to talk about making a survey for a railway and of the possibility of building a railway. Therefore in spite of the boasting of the minister about the estimates having been increased five times in five years, I would say it is a direct result of a great deal of pressure put on not only by us but by people all over Canada. It has been slow in coming and has been so far quite inadequate in the amount that has come.

The Minister had something to say about oil and gas exploration in the Northern Territories and apparently took credit to the government for the oil and gas leases which had been made out there, the exploration that is taking place and so on and so forth. The government has had absolutely nothing to do with the oil and gas exploration in the northern territories. It was done by the oil companies and individuals in spite of the government rather than because of any help it gave them. These people were handicapped in their exploration in that country by extremely high costs of transportation into and out of that country owing to the monopolistic practices and monopolistic policies which this department has pursued with regard to transportation into the northern areas. Water transportation has been a government monopoly and air transportation has been closely controlled. People who wanted to get charters to fly in there have been refused them, and so on.

Mr. Lesage: Oh, no.

Mr. Harkness: Then prices have gone up. They have prevented competition that might have brought the cost of transportation down and thus have encouraged development, particularly oil and gas exploration. I might just say that whenever any development of any kind takes place in this country the government tries to take credit for it. The Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources did so this afternoon and the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys (Mr. Prudham) did so yesterday. Actually this development has taken place in a large number of cases in spite of the red-tape regulations and the taxation policies which have been followed by this government and which have tied the hands of the people who were trying to develop the country and have

[Mr. Harkness.]

hindered the individual developers from going ahead and actually getting something done.

Yesterday the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys said that the oil development of Alberta in its early years was built up on the dominion geological surveys. Apparently he does not know the history of oil and gas development in Alberta at all. The first gas development came at Medicine Hat through people just drilling wells looking for water. The first oil development in Turner valley came about because there was an oil and gas seepage there which even the Indians had made use of and which had been known for many years. People went ahead on that basis. I must say that the oil development during the past 15 years has been aided considerably by the geological survey made in recent years. I am not denying that exploration development has been assisted. But as for the government taking any great credit, because of its geological survey, for the oil and gas development in Alberta, it is just ridiculous.

Next the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources said that what the Leader of the Opposition proposed in this resolution was a national plan, the sort of thing he would have expected from the C.C.F. party. He was trying to give the impression that what this party has asked for in this resolution not only this year but last year and in previous resolutions in former years was a planned economy. Nothing is farther from the truth. What we have proposed is a national policy which will make development possible, not a national plan which is going to fix people interested in development—individuals—in a cast-iron program and so forth. It is a policy which will make development possible. It would include, of course, irrigation, drainage, forest conservation, transport matters, freight rates and a whole host of things along that line. It is a matter of having policy along all those lines in order to create a favourable climate for development. That is just what this government has not done.

Following that, the minister said that what the government has done is to follow a specific and limited method of approach in this matter. My comment on that statement would be that it is much more limited than it is specific or anything else. In fact, it has been so limited as to be negligible as far as quite a number of things are concerned.

I would say that the policy to be followed, if it is going to be a success, must be such as to make development possible and economic. In other words, it must create this favourable climate for development of which I spoke a short time ago.