

wish to take this opportunity to make some rather general remarks about northern Canada and this bill. The bill which we are discussing deals with what I have always looked upon as two separate entities, the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories. The federal government should take another look at its plans for the future development of our nation. If at some time in the future the government feels we should have an additional two or more provinces in the northern part of our nation, we should logically and sensibly proceed to develop the various economic interests and ties of these areas. By this I mean that eventually, I suppose, the Yukon will be a Canadian province in its own right, with power to deal with its resources in the same way as other provinces.

• (5:30 p.m.)

In these circumstances, it is only sensible that we should develop plans for this territory along lines which will eventually suit it as a self-governing province. This applies also to the Territories. If, on the other hand, there is a move by the federal government to incorporate the two regions into one vast province, that is a different matter. As far as I can make out, there is no clearcut plan to govern the way in which these areas are to develop as far as power transmission to them is concerned. I realize there is a degree of self-government in these regions, but I feel there should be far more responsible self-government than there is at present.

Although the measure before us is not the best bill in the world, the act which it proposes to amend has certainly been of service to the areas concerned. I think there are opportunities for vast improvements in some respects, though I disagree greatly with parts of the speech made by the hon. member for Yukon. I believe that public ownership of power, if sensibly handled, can become a tremendous weapon for full economic development in areas such as the north. I was shocked to hear this afternoon that many of the smaller communities have been neglected for more than 20 years by a commission which was in fact set up to look after the interests of those rural areas, if you can call them rural.

When we are dealing with remote areas such as the north, subsidies are certainly in order if there is to be proper development there, even in connection with the supply of power. The hardy citizens who go to these areas are entitled to some of the amenities which we in a warmer climate enjoy.

The bill proposes to increase the membership of the commission by two members. I understand the new members are to be local people who understand local needs. This is an excellent idea and I have no objection to it. But the composition of the commission is another thing. I firmly believe that the deputy minister has no right to be sitting on the commission as chairman. If the commission is to show any measure of independence, it must be divorced from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Unless this is done, the minister and departmental officials will be giving too much political direction concerning the way in which the commission should operate. The government should look into the

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possibility of appointing a chairman from outside the department.

I note that it is proposed to increase from \$50,000 to \$250,000 the amount of money the commission can spend on investigations. Again, this is a step forward; the commission cannot do much with \$50,000 to investigate the possibilities of sites for power development in the north. I hope that when we talk about investigation of hydro or power sites we shall not fall into the trap into which a number of hydro utilities have fallen throughout Canada. We have experienced this in British Columbia. Frequently hydro sites have been chosen because engineers have said, "This is a good site for the production of power." Tremendous ecological damage has been caused because adequate surveys were never made. There is still no legislation to oblige Crown corporations to carry out surveys to ascertain what ecological and other damage could be done if a dam were built. Consequently, huge hydro dams have been built at a number of sites throughout Canada, resulting in tremendous ecological damage.

I should like to see a safeguard put into the bill before us. A very simple amendment would do the job. It is that Crown corporations would be subject to the terms of the Navigable Waters Act. If this were done, they too would be required to make sure, when applying for permission to build a dam on a particular river, that they had a good case to present to the federal authorities and had taken into account possible damage to the ecology of the area. The way things are today, there could be a repetition of what happened on the Peace River when the Bennett Dam was built. No authorization was needed. The hydro authority was not required to tell the government what they proposed to do. No surveys were made to find out what damage would be done, and now we find that the whole of the Mackenzie Delta is in jeopardy because of a dam which was built before adequate surveys had been made to determine its effect on the ecology of the area.

Another point was raised in connection with rates. Again, I appreciate the objection voiced by the hon. member for Yukon. He looks forward to the Yukon becoming eventually a separate province, and feels that profits made from the sale of power there should not go to subsidize a little plant thousands of miles away in another part of Canada. There is some logic to this, certainly. In the case of an operation such as we have in British Columbia, covering the whole province, everything can be put into a pot and the rural areas can be subsidized. But in this case we find settlements set up all over the north separated by many hundreds of miles, and this amounts to a different proposition. We were not given a very clear explanation of what "regions" means. I think these regional areas might afford the Yukon protection in the matter of price equalization. This might well be the answer; I do not know. However, this matter can be examined during the committee stage.

• (5:40 p.m.)

With regard to setting rates on a regional basis, a point raised by some hon. members in the House, it is for the commission to decide rates as well as regions. I do not