

Water Resources Programs

hydro-electric energy or to provide water for irrigation. In neither case could we reasonably expect our American friends, who would become dependent on that water, to acquiesce in a change of policy if after a few years we were to decide it would be to our advantage to reverse the decision. In other words, to embark on a policy of exporting water is to make serious long-range commitments affecting not only our own citizens but those who would be purchasing the water. We would in a real sense be going back on a moral if not a legal commitment if, having made an agreement, we were to decide to abrogate or change it.

For this reason, members of this party believe that any such decision, if one is to be made in the future, must be brought before Parliament for thorough discussion. I, for one, have been most disappointed that no one so far in this debate has risen from the government benches to support this amendment. I hope we shall hear evidence of support from hon. members opposite as the debate proceeds. I cannot understand what sensible grounds for opposition there can be. We all know the history of this country. We all know that our economic future is in serious doubt if we fail to take proper action now to affect events in the next five or ten years. It, therefore, seems to me that all of us, irrespective of party, should be most concerned about any future decision to export our water. I fail to understand why the members of the government party cannot support such an amendment as this with a clear conscience.

What we need from the government is a carefully worked out and well researched policy concerning resource development. I hope that before next Christmas the government will come down with a solid resource policy. I am, of course, sceptical about the probability of any such policy being produced and I would question the desirability of this government's proposals on the subject in any case. However, as I say, I hope we shall one day get a national resource policy. In the meantime, I trust that those of us who are here dealing with what is ostensibly a minor amendment but with what is, in reality, a substantial question of public policy, will realize the implications and support the motion.

Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova): I can assure you I shall not be long, Mr. Speaker. The rulings this afternoon have interrupted the proceedings to some extent. Quite frankly, I was not prepared to speak on

this particular amendment at the present time; I have been trying to go through the proceedings in committee to find out exactly what was said about this amendment or about the amendment in the name of the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave). Both amendments before the House are concerned with the same thing. If I recall what was said in committee, government members refused to accept an amendment put forward by a member of the New Democratic Party on the grounds that it was too simple, too blunt, too clear. This led my hon. friend from Halifax-East Hants to draw up in his usual manner the more sophisticated amendment which is now motion No. 25. Basically, it means the same thing. It reads:

● (5:20 p.m.)

This Act shall not be construed to authorize any treaty or convention with respect to exporting the water resources of Canada, and no treaty, convention or agreement with respect to such export shall be binding unless authorized by the parliament of Canada.

In other words, the amendment simply states that we will not enter into an agreement to divert or export water without the approval of Parliament; that no minister shall be allowed to make any final arrangements in this matter without the approval of the Canadian people.

Like the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent), I find it very strange that no member on the government side wishes to participate in this debate. I also find it strange that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) is not here this afternoon. There are two ministers in the House at the moment, but they are not concerned with the water act. This is the bill that the government introduced as the great legislation of this session, yet the minister himself is not here to say whether or not these amendments are acceptable. Neither was the minister in the committee to say whether the amendments moved were acceptable; and with all respect to the parliamentary secretary, I doubt very much whether he will take it upon himself to accept or reject any of these amendments.

Are the government members in favour or not in favour of the exportation of water? What is their stand on this question? We simply say that it may be true there are some instances where water should be exported. We really do not disagree about that. But we contend that this exportation should not be made without the approval of Parliament.