

make any recommendations which would eliminate the flooding of the Skagit Valley, and that the recommendations therefore can only relate to measures that the commission might recommend to reduce the environmental consequences of the flooding.

This is the way I interpret the reference, having read it as carefully as I have been able to in the short time I have had. No authority is given to the commission to reopen the decision of 1942 or to withdraw in any way the right that was granted then and in subsequent orders and agreements regarding the flooding of the Skagit Valley. The commission is simply authorized to recommend ways and means to reduce the damage that may occur in the process.

This is how I read the reference, Mr. Speaker. I must add, and I hope I am not being unfair when I say it, that it was snowing when I went into the Skagit Valley but still I was able to see it and, Mr. Speaker, I have the distinct impression it is snowing in the House of Commons today.

• (2:30 p.m.)

**Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West):** Mr. Speaker, the Skagit Valley controversy has become a symbolic one for British Columbians. More and more British Columbians are and have become alarmed and aroused at the prospect of the Skagit Valley being flooded for the purpose for which it is to be flooded. It has become symbolic because Canadians by and large are no longer content to be but hewers of wood and drawers of water for our friendly neighbours to the south.

Our interest in this issue goes back for some time. Over a year ago I received a reply from the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) in which he indicated that before any final approval could be given an application would have to come before the Federal Power Commission in the United States and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in Canada. Apparently the government is no longer holding to this particular view. I can only guess at the reasons behind the change.

On both sides of the border conservationists and ecologists are beginning to take concern for the environment beyond the stage of mere dilettanteism and have built up mass support for a better quality of life. We are beginning to agree that the preservation of our environment has a real value superior to the despoilation or exploitation of a particular area for a specific purpose. Environment has a value in itself and should be preserved.

The government obviously has preferred the International Joint Commission rather than some other independent body to study this particular issue. The IJC would be the best vehicle by which—and I hope I am wrong—to accomplish a six months' delay. Certainly some of us would like to see the 1942 and 1967 agreements negated. I refer both to the one which came about first of all with IJC approval in 1942 and the other between Seattle City Light and the British Columbia

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government in 1967. The government is very sensitive in dealing with the IJC because any suggestion that the IJC was being interfered with by government would upset a number of other questions under the commission's responsibility all along our long and so far undefended border.

The government of Canada has the power to negate the agreement outright but has chosen this other device. I am certain this other device will please the premier of British Columbia because it will take him off the hook. I think it will appeal to him also because this is an ostensible second look at the problem and the IJC which approved the matter in the first place is now to continue the study. In other words, there is not to be a disinterested appellate review conducted here. Some of us could be excused for being a little cynical and for believing that this proposed investigation might be little more than a whitewash, an appearance of action or pseudo-action.

I think the House would have been in a much better position to make some decision on this matter if the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis) had indicated whether or not he had discussed with the government of British Columbia the cost of renegotiating or getting out of the agreement completely. It seems to me there could have been a federal-provincial sharing of the \$8 million already spent by Seattle City Light. I might also mention the matter of the annual compensation to British Columbia of a pitiful \$35,000 when we know that the downstream benefits should have produced at least \$1 million according to the Columbia River formula.

I see you are becoming a bit impatient, Mr. Speaker, and I promise to wrap up my remarks forthwith. I believe the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) put his finger on the point that this is an ecological study only since we have no assurance that it is anything beyond that and there is nothing to indicate that the project will not go ahead regardless of the Commission's findings. In conclusion may I say that it does not really matter how many hearings or studies are conducted because the vast majority of the people of British Columbia want the proposed plan to flood the Skagit River Valley stopped and stopped completely.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi):** Mr. Speaker, as one of the first references to this matter goes back to the Speech from the Throne of October 13, 1970 and that it was mentioned on many occasions, we are happy to note that an inquiry has been requested by the International Joint Commission to establish the probable consequences of raising the level of Ross Lake in British Columbia.

Obviously, if this would happen, our country would suffer, but I believe that the International Joint Commission is ready to carry out a serious study and to consult environmental experts and others to assess the possible consequences of this action so that this will not happen and that the City of Seattle will find other sources for its electricity.