

Fishing and Recreational Harbours

used to communicate with the outside world along rivers or roads. Several native communities were totally dislocated and had to be moved when the lake was formed.

It was the wisdom of the department responsible for those particular people to move them close to civilization. When they discovered they could not cope with this new-found society, they moved back into the bush. The type of craft they were using to communicate with the outside world in order to get their mail, bread, butter, salt and sugar, were little canoes and boats. Then they found the little canoes and boats, which they had traditionally used, were no good for this lake which formed, if the wind was right, 20 foot waves. It was an ocean to them. There was no one who offered them any help in acquiring the skills necessary to traverse these waters or in acquiring equipment necessary to traverse these waters. Thus they are totally isolated from the mainstream of life.

The Minister of Transport tells us it is to be user-pay, and if they want to get sugar from across the lake they can buy themselves a \$40,000 or a \$50,000 ship, hire themselves a crew, and see what they can come up with. At the present time I do not know of any single installation in respect to a harbour, wharf, pier, breakwater, slipway, marina or any part thereof on this lake. There are a number of private installations which would have to be brought in by industry, and they would have their normal access to resources cut off and impaired. They had to adopt a whole new system. They used to be truck loggers, and now they take their logs, pile them on the ice in the winter time and, when the ice melts, the logs sink into the water. They had to buy big ships of an ocean-going type to move their goods and raw materials around this waterway. There was no assistance from anyone. The federal government, the Minister of Transport, and the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. LeBlanc) knew they had to buy their own boats. All of a sudden, communities around these lakes were totally isolated, yet no one offered any assistance.

● (2050)

There are other areas in which the Minister of Fisheries should have been involved in this whole mess, as some people call it, in central British Columbia. There were no environmental studies of the sort we talk of now in relation to pipelines and projects such as the James Bay project even though the ministry claims responsibility over several acts, including the legislation designed to protect the environment, notably the Navigable Waters Act. However, from recent inquiries directed to the department I learned that when the minister is asked to make comments or pass judgment, he may express his views with regard to any of these developments such as the Peace River power development, but there is no need for him to issue a licence, and he has no power to hold up such projects if they are discovered to be harmful to the environment. This is critical.

The dam project on the Peace River, as we now know, has changed the temperature in central British Columbia and in some of the northern regions by as much as five degrees. The temperature has moderated to that extent. On the surface one

[Mr. Oberle.]

might think that the people living in the northern areas would greet this change with some enthusiasm. After all, it gets pretty cold up there—40 below in some places. But that is not the whole story. Humidity was also affected. And while we shall not know what the situation really is for another 25 years—officials to whom we have spoken say, “Well, the weather has been bad everywhere; this alteration in the level of humidity will also have repercussions in the region.”

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, what it has done to the farmers. The fact that temperatures are not as cold as they were does not affect them greatly, but it does bother them in the summertime because the humidity detracts from the fast ripening of No. 1 wheat in a region which was a choice area for growing this commodity. Since the lake was created the farmers have yet to raise a decent crop, and many of them are saying that the dam may well be responsible.

Then there are the loggers who, in the middle of November, build their roads into the bush and carry on activities in readiness for their main work which takes place in the winter time. The area is not very accessible in the summer by virtue of its swampy nature. They, too, found there was increased snowfall and insufficient frost in the ground to enable their heavy equipment to be moved in the normal way. They are still improvising and wondering how they will be able to adjust to these new conditions. I am not saying this is all negative. I am pointing out that some of these things were not considered before this project was undertaken, and that the Minister of Fisheries had some responsibility for expressing a judgment with regard to such a massive intervention but failed to take steps to protect the interests of a greater variety of people than those whose interests were considered by the provincial government.

This bill enables the minister to enter into agreements with the provinces and with individuals. I should like to ask him what agreements have been considered with the province of British Columbia in connection with Williston Lake. Certainly, the province is responsible for building this hydro project and I suppose it should have some responsibility for ensuring that the people whose lives have been disturbed, the people who have been isolated, the people whose freedom has been interfered with by this scheme, should at least be given some compensation in the area of transport and so on.

The Findlay River is one of the prime tourist areas in my country. Thousands of people go up that beautiful canyon to find enjoyment and fulfilment during the summer in pursuit of their favourite sport. There are two native communities there. First there is the community of Fort Ware, formerly totally self-sufficient. Today, not only can they not get up the river, because at most times the river is flooded and choked with debris, but they cannot even get access to the lake. They have talked to British Columbia Hydro but there is no comfort there.

The forestry service, which is interested in the lake, has undertaken to do what it can to clear the debris from the waterway but no substantial help is in sight, certainly not from the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development