

Supply—Northern Affairs

is only one permit which has been issued to survey the headwaters of the Yukon river, and it has been issued to Quebec Metallurgical Industries Limited. No request has been received from others. I am speaking of the period since 1951 or 1952. I am speaking of latest developments. I believe that is what the hon. member has in mind.

As to the alleged difference of opinion between this government and the government of British Columbia, may I say that we are not aware of it. The hon. member might have read newspaper reports about some speeches or some declarations made in British Columbia, but no representations have been made to us by the government of British Columbia. The only thing I could do, I believe, about the question of the export of water power or power—and I believe it is the most appropriate thing for me to do—is to refer the committee to a statement made by the Prime Minister on December 8, 1953. I do not at this moment have the reference to the page, but I know that the members of the committee will recall the statement that was made by the Prime Minister at the time he was introducing the bill to set up the new Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. There is nothing I could add to that statement at this time.

Mr. Green: Is it perfectly clear that the policy of the dominion government is to refuse to give permission for the construction of this Alcoa plant which will mean a power plant in the United States and aluminum made in Alaska which will be in competition in the United States market with aluminum made at Kitimat in British Columbia, a situation which might well prejudice the whole Kitimat scheme. Mind you, aluminum from Alaska would enter the United States duty free whereas aluminum from Kitimat would be subject to duty levied by the United States. This is a very serious situation from the point of view of the west coast. We would like to be sure that the dominion is not going to take steps that will mean a power plant and smelter in Skagway, Alaska, rather than on the Taku river in British Columbia or in some other Canadian centre. Unfortunately half the water is controlled by the province and the other half by the dominion. Some way or other an agreement will have to be reached. Otherwise I believe there is a chance of the companies going to Ungava, certainly going away from the west coast. Will the minister give us a definite statement tonight on dominion government policy?

[Mr. Lesage.]

Mr. Lesage: I can do nothing better than to read what the Prime Minister had to say about this matter. This is the policy of the government and there is nothing to add. He said:

The hydroelectric possibilities of the region are immense. By the construction of dams at appropriate places, some of them reversing the flow of certain rivers and lakes draining into the Yukon river, and by taking advantage of the large drop of the level of that country to the Pacific, power can be developed in enormous quantities. It was suggested to me that there was more than 4½ million horsepower that could be developed in that way. Hon. members will remember that some time ago there was a suggestion that these waters, or much of them, could be diverted for development into Alaska. Well, they are Canadian waters and while we do not want to adopt any dog in the manger attitude about our resources which cannot be used in our own country, I think that those which can be used in our country must be reserved for the generations that will follow us and who will develop this country. I was happy that the minister's declaration in that regard was applauded in the house on December 17, 1952—

That was a declaration by my predecessor.—and I am glad to see that my reference to it today meets with the unanimous approval of the representatives of all the Canadian people. We do not want to be isolationists but we do feel we have a trust to future generations for the resources with which Providence has endowed this vast land over which now our people exercise sovereignty.

I believe that is a complete statement of government policy, and there is nothing I could add.

Mr. Green: Will the minister take steps to have this policy communicated formally to the government of British Columbia?

Mr. Lesage: I had a long interview with the premier of British Columbia last December. He was accompanied by the minister of finance of his government and I was accompanied by my deputy minister. We had a long interview during which I made it clear that that was the policy of the government.

Mr. Green: I thought the minister said a few moments ago that he did not know anything about British Columbia's stand.

Mr. Lesage: No, that is not what I said. I said that I did not know anything officially about any differences of opinion. In December, when we discussed the matter with the premier of British Columbia, there was no apparent disagreement.

Mr. Green: Can the minister take steps to have some further discussion with the British Columbia authorities on this question?

Mr. Lesage: I have just written to the premier of British Columbia last week telling him that I intend to call on him when I am in Victoria, and of course that will be one of the questions on the agenda.