

International Rivers

Anything I say concerning the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources is not meant in any way to reflect upon him. He is merely the minister in charge of the department, a department which has before it an enormous number of responsibilities. He depends upon public servants whose business it is to give him advice. Wellnigh unquestionably almost anything he says comes right from what his advisers tell him to say. So he is not altogether responsible for everything said by him in that respect. I want to make that perfectly clear, because there is no doubt—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would point out to the hon. member that although the remarks he has made were made with a certain amount of levity, that fact does not appear in *Hansard*. Anyone who is not here this evening and may read *Hansard* tomorrow would infer from what the hon. member said that the minister is not responsible for what he says in the house. I think the hon. member would not want to leave that in *Hansard*, that whatever the minister has said has been dictated to him by his advisers.

Mr. Blackmore: Mr. Speaker, in a moment or two I would have gone on to qualify that statement so as to make it perfectly clear. It is my desire to have the whole thing perfectly clear, and generally I succeed in at least some measure in that respect.

A minister in any government, in large measure, must rely for advice upon the experts in his department, and the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources is no exception. Being a young man filled with energy and activity, and with many responsibilities—

An hon. Member: He has a Rhodes scholar for a deputy, too.

Mr. Blackmore: Probably more than one Rhodes scholar, and probably a good many graduates of the London school of economics, too. Some hon. members do not take the London school of economics very seriously, but I could give them information which would sober them down, I will tell you, on that subject.

Just to show how insecure the position of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources is—and I do not include the minister in this at all—I would refer the house to the minister's letter, which of course he had to sign as the responsible minister, dated January 24, 1955, and addressed to J. W. Bailey, secretary of the meeting committee, Nakusp, British Columbia. I turn to page 2 of that letter and place on record some of the statements made therein, where the minister begins to give his reasons for

opposing the Castlegar dam. These have been referred to before, but I wish to discuss them. This is No. 1:

It would be unwise to proceed with this project at this time.

Period.

The power potentialities of the Columbia river basin are still under investigation.

They might be under investigation for another 15 years, for all we know. Meantime the water is running to waste and nothing is being done about it. Meantime people across the boundary line of British Columbia are going without power which they could generate with that water. To go on with the letter:

Once the potential of this river system has been assessed—

He does not say by whom, but presumably by the all-wise Ottawa people.

—and recommendations have been made as to the carrying out of specific projects, both the United States and Canada will be free to exercise, commonly or separately, the rights retained and guaranteed under the boundary waters treaty of 1909. For instance, should Canada find it in its interests to do so, the flood waters of the Upper Kootenay river could be diverted through canal flats into the Columbia. They could then be utilized for power development through the full head of the Columbia river in Canada. These and other flood waters could then be fully utilized for stream regulation, power and other purposes in Canada. If these projects prove to be economically possible, they will change very considerably the planning of the development of the whole Columbia river basin.

How much more do we know about why this project should not be proceeded with, after reading all that? He says, "It would be unwise to proceed with this project at this time". I have read you the reason he gives; and it is so vague, so incomprehensible, so intangible that there is nothing substantial connected with it at all. I think all hon. members must recognize that.

Now, there is one of the main pillars upon which the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, and I suppose the Minister of Trade and Commerce, rest their case! Let us see how powerful the next reason is. It says:

No. 2. According to what is presently known, the project does not provide for the maximum use of the storage potential at the Arrow lakes and of the power potential on the Columbia.

Well, nobody said it did. Certainly British Columbia did not say it did. And why in the world British Columbia should know all that before it could agree to a simple little project such as would be involved in the building of a low-level dam at the outlet of the Arrow lakes, and agreeing with the United States that it could take 3 million acre feet stored up behind that dam and use it to firm up

[Mr. Blackmore.]