

Columbia River Treaty

from the *Globe and Mail* of April 9, 1962, which reads as follows:

In a statement issued earlier from his office at Ottawa following General McNaughton's charges Friday night, Mr. Pearson said the treaty should be renegotiated at once by a Canadian government which would pay sufficient regard to Canada's interests. General McNaughton would have been a most effective person to act for Canada in the renegotiation of the treaty, which is now more necessary than ever.

The Prime Minister made that statement in 1962, and it indicates that he too was impressed and overawed by the great reputation of General McNaughton, who is a distinguished Canadian. But the Prime Minister has changed his mind. Many competent engineers have changed their minds, and I am hoping that before the debate concludes all hon. members will agree that this is the best possible treaty under the circumstances.

On the subject of General McNaughton's evidence I want to make it abundantly clear that his major opposition to the treaty came after the signing of the treaty on January 17, 1961. This was brought out in the evidence because, as Hon. Mr. Fulton intimated, when it was put to the members of the negotiating team whether the treaty should be recommended to cabinet for referral to the house for approval General McNaughton, while he criticized certain engineering aspects of the treaty, did not disagree with its referral to cabinet to be followed by the approval of parliament. Indeed, he did not come out as a strong opponent of the treaty until April of 1962.

Before I move on to the diversion question to which I referred earlier, there is another aspect of this problem I should like to mention. I think Mr. Fulton demonstrated his basic integrity when he was asked whether he had been a critic of certain aspects of the treaty. He indicated that he was still a critic of certain aspects of the treaty, but he said that he took the matter to the people of British Columbia in the most direct way possible, by way of a direct appeal to the electorate, and the people of British Columbia had made their opinion known in no uncertain terms and in a democratic society we must, after all, accept the verdict of the people.

Mr. Barnett: I wonder whether the hon. member who has the floor, and who comes from another province, is aware that the question of the Columbia river treaty was hardly mentioned in the last British Columbia election campaign.

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Mr. Dinsdale: I have only to take the word of Hon. Davie Fulton, who campaigned in the province of British Columbia.

Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Some of us campaigned, too, and we never heard him speak of it.

Mr. Dinsdale: Mr. Speaker, I think it was Winston Churchill who said that democracy is the worst form of government except all other kinds, and we must accept the verdict of the people.

I come now to the question of jurisdiction, which involves the problem of diversion. I am not going to give any legal opinions here, but where there is a resource which basically belongs to the provincial authorities, and especially where there are areas of joint responsibility, there is no absolute legal opinion that can be rendered to clarify this point. It was for this reason that the former Conservative government in 1961 called together the resources for tomorrow conference. One of the most difficult and critical areas of discussion was this problem of jurisdictional dispute.

To assist in resolving the jurisdictional difficulty a resource ministers council was set up with a secretariat to advise and undertake basic research. It is hoped that from this new breakthrough the continuing jurisdictional difficulties will be resolved.

The question of diversion, Mr. Speaker, is one that I want to dwell upon for just a moment, particularly diversion to the prairies. Here is what Hon. Mr. Fulton said on that particular question:

The incredible thing here—as with the other criticisms with which I shall deal—is that those who make them show a blithe disregard for the specific, black and white provisions of the treaty—even after their attention has been drawn to them. Or at most they make a grudging admission—"Oh yes—you have safeguarded that right specifically in the treaty, but of course, because of the treaty we will never be able to exercise."

Then Mr. Fulton invited the committee to look at the facts in respect of three areas where this type of criticism is most often asserted. He dealt specifically with the alleged loss of the right of diversion to the prairies or for irrigation and domestic use there or elsewhere. Here is what Mr. Fulton, the chief negotiator, said:

The fact is that the only restriction is with respect to diversion for power purposes, and then only for the duration of the treaty.

This answers the question that was posed just a moment ago by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas). Mr. Fulton indicated that he was fully aware of this