

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 10, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

#### STATEMENT BY MINISTER ON DISCUSSIONS WITH CHAIRMAN OF UNITED STATES PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

**Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House about my discussions yesterday with the Hon. Russell Train, Chairman of the United States President's Council on Environmental Quality. Mr. Train is the cabinet level adviser to the president on environmental matters.

Among other things, I drew Mr. Train's attention to the impressive list of studies being carried out by the Canadian government and industry to ensure the protection of our northern environment, especially in respect of the Mackenzie Valley corridor.

We had an exchange of views on the protection of the boundary areas of our coasts, especially protection from oil spills. Mr. Train and I agreed that on the Pacific coast, in the Georgia Strait-Puget Sound-Juan de Fuca Straits area, a better understanding of the marine ecosystem is essential for the effective management and protection of these waters. We arranged to meet soon with United States scientists and other experts to start a comprehensive and detailed joint study which will provide the basis for programs and other measures to protect and enhance the environment of this area.

Since my meeting with Mr. Train last July a joint contingency plan has been prepared which will be effective in the boundary waters of the Pacific and Atlantic coasts as well as in the Great Lakes. The contingency plan for the Great Lakes has been in effect for over a year, and on several occasions it has proved highly successful in containing and cleaning up oil and other hazardous substances. Within a few weeks we shall have a Canada-U.S. agreement which will bring fully into effect similar joint plans on our two coasts.

Mr. Train and I reviewed at length the serious problems of high water levels in the Great Lakes. There are, of course, very severe limitations on what can be done to lower these levels. The fact is that the lakes are full as a result of record levels of precipitation, and the only means of affecting the levels is by controlling the outflows from Lake Superior and Lake Ontario. The International Joint Commission is at present considering a plan to increase storage in Lake Superior, and will hold public meetings on this plan in May.

Mr. Train asked me for my views on several proposals now before the U.S. Congress to increase the outflow of water from Lake Michigan at Chicago. I replied that Canadians would doubtless object to any proposals which would amount to an export of water from Canada.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Davis:** I asked Mr. Train about progress on the U.S. side in implementing our Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality. Mr. Train was well aware of the concerns which have been expressed about the timing of the U.S. programs. He undertook to provide further details about the flow of U.S. federal government funds this year and next year for the construction of municipal sewage treatment projects in the Great Lakes basin. I reported that on our side, with the co-operation of Ontario, the municipal sewage treatment plant construction program is ahead of schedule. This is the result of our research efforts which have substantially reduced the capital cost of phosphorous removal facilities and speeded up construction. Mr. Train assured me of the determination of his government to meet its commitments and schedules under the agreement, although he suggested there might be some slippage in timetables.

We discussed the proposal to raise the Ross Dam in the state of Washington, which would result in the flooding of the Skagit valley upstream in British Columbia. I conveyed to Mr. Train our determination, and the determination of the British Columbia government, not to allow the Skagit Valley in Canada to be flooded. I also made clear our desire to seek a negotiated settlement which would take account of the legitimate rights and interests of the Seattle City Light and Power Company. Mr. Train said that his government's position was that a valid contract exists between Seattle City Light and Power Company and British Columbia, and that any solution must be arrived at within this context. We both agreed on the desirability of bringing the parties directly concerned to the negotiating table at the earliest possible moment.

**Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my party I want to thank the minister for his statement. I want to make it clear that we in this party are very cognizant of the importance of ongoing discussions such as have taken place over the past day with the President's adviser on environmental matters meeting our own Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis). Having said that, however, I think that in part of the minister's statement questions are raised rather than answered.

• (1410)

I refer to the minister's remarks on the discussion that he had with Mr. Train on the Mackenzie Valley route. He did not say in his statement to the House just what the implications of those discussions were or what he really