

*Water Resources*

● (12:50 p.m.)

We must give credit to the government of Ontario for early initiative in this field. It was because of that province's concern over what was happening to its natural environment that pressure was put on Ottawa for federal assistance in the late 40's and early 50's. Because of this pressure, ad hoc arrangements were made whereby Ottawa assisted with specific projects. There was some realization that this was quite inadequate, and in 1953 the Canada Water Conservation Assistance Act was passed, which remained on the statute books of Canada and was not used to any great extent really until the latter 50's and the early 60's. This lack of use resulted from a general lack of awareness on the part of the general public to the crisis that was upon us. However, between 1957 and 1963 several major water conservation projects were undertaken which involved the direct participation of the government of Canada. I could refer to the greater Metro Toronto scheme, the Winnipeg floodway and water control project, the South Saskatchewan dam and the Passamaquoddy project in the maritimes as well as other similar projects in other parts of Canada. This was the first real attempt at federal government leadership in this field.

It was soon realized that the Canada Water Conservation Assistance Act was quite inadequate because it placed the initiative on the provincial government in getting projects started. It had been felt that direct participation by Ottawa to the extent of 37½ per cent of the total cost of the projects would be sufficient incentive. We are fully aware that the management, conservation and development of our renewable resources is going to be an expensive proposition. However, in view of the remaining financial obligations, even the 37½ per cent was not sufficient to arouse provincial governments, who have the direct responsibility in this area, to take the necessary action. This experience of course arises from the fact that there is a fundamental jurisdictional problem, and it was for that reason the government of Canada, seizing the leadership responsibility which must inevitably devolve upon them, called the Resources for Tomorrow Conference in 1961.

The provinces own the renewable resources. Water moves from one province to another. There is interprovincial jurisdictional division. There are international complications that must be dealt with. It is obvious that the federal government had an obligation

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

to provide encouragement and leadership in the resource development field, within the constitutional framework of course.

Fundamentally it was realized, because of the unhappy experience with the Canada Water Conservation Assistance Act, there must be some federal financial assistance on a guaranteed basis, on the basis of a specific formula underpinning the scheme.

Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Resources for Tomorrow Conference, as has been pointed out by several hon. members in this debate, the basic ingredient of federal leadership in the wise management of our renewable resources, including water, is lacking. There is no provision whatsoever for financial participation. Instead, I would say this is a retrograde step and we are going back to the laissez-faireism and ad hocism, if I may use that phrase, that existed before the Canada Water Conservation Assistance Act was passed.

The bill and preliminary publicity material issued in connection with it are full of "it is expected" and "we hope". There is no specific terminology to indicate that the government of Canada has decided to take a firm lead in this matter. It is designed to deal with the area of jurisdictional dispute. However, this area has already been adequately dealt with by the Resource Ministers' Council, which is very seldom referred to these days but does exist with a secretariat located in the city of Montreal for the precise purpose of overcoming the areas of jurisdictional dispute.

The Resource Ministers' Council has done excellent work, notwithstanding the relative neglect by the Liberal administration since they returned to power in 1963. It has reviewed all the cost-sharing agreements; it has collected all the basic data concerning Canada's water resources; it sponsored the Pollution of Our Environment Conference in the fall of 1966 and it has encouraged Canada's participation in the hydrological decade which is from 1965 to 1974.

It is not necessary, Mr. Speaker, to bring forward a piece of legislation now, which, in pious terms reinforced by Irish oratory, hopes to deal with the problem of jurisdictional division in the field of resource management. We have the machinery; what we need now is federal leadership in the renewable resource field.

In his speech the minister emphasized, and I must give him credit for this, that he recognized that the greatest source of inadequacy was the failure of the government to put its