

Prairie Transmission Lines

Minister of Canada (Mr. St. Laurent) felt it desirable to allot extra time for the discussion of a bill similar to the one now before us because of the importance of that bill to the people of Canada. For an hon. member to get up and suggest that it is not in the best interests of democracy that all phases of this bill should be discussed is simply preposterous.

I spoke on a similar bill last session because I believed that if the pipe line was routed through Canada it would be advantageous to that part of the country which I represent. I felt that it would be advantageous to Canada as a whole to have the pipe line routed solely through Canada. I am not going to repeat the arguments I advanced at the last session, but I do submit that we should look at this proposal from a broad national point of view rather than to consider only the advantages which might accrue to our particular constituencies.

In his closing remarks the hon. member for Calgary East (Mr. Harkness) referred to the importance from a national defence point of view of routing this pipe line through Canada. I want to enlarge upon that because I believe it to be of prime importance from a defence point of view that the line should be routed through Canada. It was mentioned that industries might be located along the line and that certain military establishments might be constructed or maintained in the mountains at points in the vicinity of the pipe line where they could get cheap power.

Before I deal with that particular point may I say that I think it is well for this house to realize the position of our defences on the Pacific coast. I spoke about this at the last session when I referred to the gap in our defences which exists along the Pacific coast from the United States boundary between British Columbia and the northwestern states to the boundary between British Columbia and Alaska. Nothing has been done since last session to fill that gap. In fact the situation has deteriorated.

Last year the Royal Canadian Navy had on the Pacific coast a cruiser which was considered to be an operational vessel. Toward the latter part of last session we were informed by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) that that cruiser was to be turned into a training ship. There are no submarine hunting units on the Pacific coast such as there are on the Atlantic where they have the carrier *Magnificent* and certain frigates which would be available for the hunting of submarines which might lurk in those waters should there be another war. Within the last few months there have been reports from

United States sources that unknown submarines have been off the shores of British Columbia and the western states. On the Pacific coast we have no vessel of the Royal Canadian Navy that can hope to cope with the new submarines that we know other powers possess. That is merely one phase of it. Only a few months ago, when answering questions which were prompted by the Mainguy report, the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) made it quite clear that in his estimation the defences on the Pacific coast had to play second fiddle to the defences on the Atlantic seaboard. Even questions such as a laundry, which was one of the very minor points brought out in the Mainguy report, which the naval authorities at Esquimalt had been asking for for years, was turned down because other places had a higher order of priority.

Only today I received a copy of the *Victoria Colonist*, dated March 4, in which I find an editorial deploring the fact that there is no air force headquarters at Victoria.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The remarks of the hon. member are not relevant to the pipe line bill.

Mr. Pearkes: Mr. Speaker, my endeavour now is to show how weak our defences are on the Pacific coast, which emphasizes the supreme importance of the moving from the vicinity of the coast, and the coast cities, some of the manufacturing establishments that are there. After removing them where are they to go unless they are to go where they can get cheap power? And if the cheap power is to be sent east of the Rockies and south of the international border, then there is no place to which these industries can be moved.

I do emphasize the point that the air defences of the Pacific coast are amazingly weak. Year after year those who have been connected with the R.C.A.F. in Victoria have been pleading for an auxiliary squadron to be established, or for a headquarters from which the training of air force personnel might proceed. As this editorial says—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the principle of the bill.

Mr. Graydon: He is right on the beam.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, I would remind you that natural gas is a very hard element to confine.

Mr. Pearkes: If you so rule, Mr. Speaker, I will not refer to the headquarters which the air force personnel wish to have established in Victoria, except to mention a letter that I received today from the Minister of National Defence in which he said that the matter