

Columbia River Treaty

constitutional practice if not our constitutional law, requires approval by this house. I think the procedure recommended by the Prime Minister, namely the reference of this matter to the committee on external affairs, is an appropriate one. The treaty also must be approved by a two thirds majority of the Senate of the United States, and that is always a question mark in agreements of this kind. Perhaps we should also remind ourselves that while this treaty must be approved by the two legislatures, it cannot be made effective in its implementation without the co-operation of the province of British Columbia. That is another element which enters into the final consideration of this matter, and I do not need to stress the importance of that element, I am sure, to my hon. friends the cabinet ministers from British Columbia.

We welcome the conclusion of the treaty or the signature of the treaty, and we will make our own views on the terms of the treaty known when it is before the house for consideration.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, the members of this group listened with great interest to the Prime Minister with respect to the signing of this treaty tomorrow. I could not help but think of another treaty that was signed with respect to the Columbia river, namely the Oregon treaty of 1846, article 2 of which provides that British subjects shall have the right of navigation from the upper waters of the Columbia river to the sea in perpetuity. In return for that right the British government gave the United States government all the land lying between the Columbia river and the Pacific to the 49th parallel.

I trust that when we conclude this treaty we do not come off second best. The treaty of 1846 was violated by the United States through the building of the Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams without so much as a word being written to any authority in Canada. My authority for that statement is the leader of the official opposition to whom I wrote a letter when he was under secretary of state and asked him to search the correspondence in order to find whether there was a single line about this violation of the treaty by the United States government. He wrote back and told me that after a most extensive search of external affairs files his officials could not find a line written about the violation of the Oregon treaty of 1846.

I wish to say that under the circumstances we in this group cannot agree with what appears to be this unnecessary and unseemly haste in signing this treaty. I am not alone when I say that. The Prime Minister knows that what I am saying is true. I make that statement in the knowledge that I have the

wholehearted support of numerous organizations in my constituency, in British Columbia and of thousands of persons directly or indirectly affected or concerned who are members of all parties in this house.

I suggest that this is a rather hasty step. There are numerous organizations and thousands of persons opposed to or affected by the proposed building of the High Arrow dam, and their consulting engineers have not had an opportunity to present their views since the filing of that memorable document—I believe it is No. 180—on November 18 last. I was physically wounded on November 18, Mr. Speaker, but I was spiritually wounded when I read that document on November 18 last which contained the proposals for the draft treaty to which the Prime Minister has now referred.

I might say that these people and these organizations and their consulting engineers have not had an opportunity since November 18 to make representations to the government of Canada or to appear before the external affairs committee in order to give their evidence and to cross-examine some of the people who live down in the cubbyholes of the water resources branch of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources and who think in terms of hydro development only, not in terms of human beings and the conservation of natural resources.

My second reason for opposing this treaty and for suggesting that this is unnecessary and unseemly haste is that we shall not have during this debate, namely the debate on the budget, an opportunity properly to discuss this matter because the speakers are arranged for today, and they have their rights and will go ahead, and the treaty will be signed tomorrow.

My third reason is that Hon. W. A. C. Bennett, premier of British Columbia, announced on Thursday, December 29 that he has ordered the British Columbia energy board to make a complete investigation into the cost of the Columbia and Peace river projects, including the downstream benefits, in order, as he says, to let the sunlight into the facts; and that the first report is to be handed to him on or before March 1. That means without a doubt some months of delay.

In addition Hon. Ray Williston, minister of lands and forests has also said that he is most reluctant to predict when construction will start, as the British Columbia and federal governments have yet to agree on the terms of the agreement. Then he gave these reasons. All engineering studies must be completed, including the studies of the British Columbia energy board—

[Mr. Pearson.]