

International Rivers

I move, seconded by the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Johnston):

That Bill No. 3 be not now read a second time but that the subject matter thereof be referred to the standing committee on external affairs.

There has been evidence throughout this debate that a good deal of additional information is required. I, for one, cannot support the second reading of a bill unless I am satisfied in my own mind that I have all the information necessary to render a proper decision. And it is to the principle of the bill I am speaking at the moment. If we are asked to endorse the principle of the bill, as we are now asked, then all I can assume is that there will be a great many members in the house who are in a fog or a haze with respect to the actual principle at the time they cast their votes. Certainly I would find it extremely difficult to sleep tonight if I were to give approval to the second reading of this bill, in the light of the very scanty information we have concerning certain vital aspects of this whole matter.

My amendment simply means that we do not have to accept the principle of the bill at the moment, but rather that the subject matter thereof be referred to the committee on external affairs so that all information necessary could be acquired, and all hon. members in that committee would be in possession of that necessary information and could either approve or disapprove of the bill. It would then come back to the house and hon. members would then be able to face a vote on second reading and assert conscientiously that they were fully conscious of the implications involved. That is the position we find it necessary to take at this time.

Right Hon. C. D. Howe (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, if this amendment passes it kills the bill for this session, because the amendment is that the bill be not read a second time.

I wonder why everyone is so frightened of the bill. What is the purpose of the bill? Well, the purpose is to require the federal government to agree with the province that this is a desirable project. If we so agree a licence is issued and the work proceeds. We have had the same situation with permits under the Electricity and Fluid Exportation Act, and that act has expressed the accepted policy of this government since 1907. I have heard some great debates on this question.

My hon. friend says that this is legislation aimed against British Columbia. Well, if so the same principle has been aimed against other provinces in the past. I recall that one of the great debates of my first session of parliament was as to whether a licence should be issued to the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company to export 40,000 kilowatts

of power from its Cedars plant on the St. Lawrence river to the Aluminum Company of America at Massena, New York. That was really a debate. This echoes that debate; "the water is running down river anyway; why not use it?" That was the principal keynote. We have the members of the Social Credit party saying, "The water is running down the river, let us use it now. Never mind the future." That has been the keynote of this argument from that section of the house.

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): We have been told several times that there are 75,000 kilowatts of unsold power in that area; "Therefore never mind the rest of it. That 75,000 kilowatts is a lot of unsold power. Let the rest of it go to the United States."

Some hon. Members: No, no.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): I did not interrupt you. Then there was the great debate between the Ontario government and the federal government about the export of surplus power from Ontario.

Mr. Fleming: An Ontario Liberal government.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): An Ontario Liberal government and a federal Liberal government at Ottawa. The two arguments were used there; well, the water is running down the river anyway; we have the unsold power being generated, why not export? Fortunately this parliament decided not to export that power and today, as I said earlier in the debate, the province of Ontario is developing its last hydroelectric power. The province of Quebec, instead of sending power down to make aluminum at Massena, New York, is using that power to make aluminum in Canada. We were then making it at a plant in the province of Quebec that was less than one-twentieth the size it is today. If we had been willing to send that power over the line the plant at Massena would have been a big plant today, and the plant on the Saguenay would not be the size it is today.

I point out that I said nothing that could be construed as being of a political nature in explaining the purpose of this bill. The purpose of this bill is simply to require, in connection with international streams, that we pass on the desirability of the export of regulated water in the same manner as we do for electricity and natural gas. If the application will stand examination a licence may well be granted. We do not know too much about this proposal. We have been told a lot about it in this debate. All I have seen is the contract that has been tabled, but I am told by the leader of the Social Credit