

The Address—Mr. Lesage

seen fit to provide these additional benefits does not give it the right to act as if it had initiated all the policies under which the benefits are made available and to present itself—as did the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Green) the other day—as the only defender of the little people of Canada. Oh, it is quite easy to act quickly when the only thing which is involved is the increasing of the amount of benefits and assistance within the framework of already existing Liberal policies.

I am glad to see that the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Hamilton) is in the house because I now wish to come to the point made in the speech from the throne with respect to a national development policy. As was to be expected, that policy is not defined in the speech from the throne, nor was it defined or explained by the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) when he referred to it in this debate on October 15. I have gone through the discourses of the Prime Minister and those of his predecessor as leader of the Conservative party in this house with reference to this subject during the past years, but I have not been able to find any definition of a national development policy or plan. On October 24 of this year I asked the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources if it was his intention to outline to the house the famous national development policy or plan which the Conservatives had been talking about for years. As I expected, I received no answer. Anyway, it is usual to receive no answer from the minister. The only logical conclusion to which we can come is that this government has no national development plan or policy in mind.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Nonsense.

Mr. Lesage: Well, I hope the parliamentary assistant, instead of interrupting with remarks like "nonsense"—which might easily apply to him—will rise during this debate and, if he is so good and so well informed, will give to this house an explanation outlining this famous national development policy of the Conservative party. I challenge him to do so.

As a matter of fact what does the speech from the throne mention and what did the Prime Minister mention in his speech on national development? He merely mentioned the creation of facilities for the production and transmission of cheaper electric power to the Atlantic provinces, assistance in the financing of Beechwood, discussion with Saskatchewan on the South Saskatchewan dam and discussions with the United States government on the development of the

Columbia river. Most of these things are not new. They certainly cannot be presented as constituting a national development policy.

After all, a national policy must be precise in scope. It requires principles and methods, and it has to be made available to all regions of Canada. There is nothing of the sort in the government proposals for those things I have just mentioned. Moreover, the democratic way in which to initiate a national policy in any field is for the government to spell it out in a special piece of legislation and submit it to this parliament. But the government is content with promises; it has become accustomed to that since the last electoral campaign.

The first promise is about the creation of facilities for the production and transmission of cheaper electric power in the Atlantic provinces. This is, after all, only a continuation of the policy which was announced in this house by Mr. Harris, the former minister of finance, on March 14 last, and detailed by myself on April 9. However, since October 14 it has become obvious that whatever is intended by hon. gentlemen opposite is not for the Atlantic provinces, but only for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Then I understand that the government intends to initiate new discussions with the government of Saskatchewan with regard to the South Saskatchewan dam. The previous government had such discussions, but they were not successful. If the present government can come to reasonable terms with the government of Saskatchewan, so much the better, but after the answers the Prime Minister gave in this house last week I am afraid it will take a long time, even more time than the present administration will have at its disposal.

Finally, the speech from the throne says, and I quote:

My ministers are pressing for a favourable settlement of international problems in connection with the Columbia river.

I am astonished that any government should have the nerve to put into Her Majesty's mouth words which have so little relation to the truth. After the questions I put in the house to the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources on April 22 and 24, it is obvious that there has been no discussion with the United States authorities on the subject since I led a delegation to Washington on May 20 last. Nothing has been done in this field, as nothing has been done in other fields by this government of words and promises, even on such an important matter as this, and the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources should know it by this time.