

*National Energy Board Act (No. 3)*

before the Supreme Court of Canada. Others are still before lower courts, and there is no solution in sight between the two governments. As I said, there are currently two cases before the courts in Newfoundland and Quebec, dealing with some aspect or other of that dispute, and each party, each provincial government uses every means available to either delay or rush the case before the courts. At any rate, these cases have been before the courts for quite a number of years.

The Newfoundland Court of Appeal has just ruled in favour of that province in a third action but an appeal has been lodged against it before the Supreme Court of Canada.

I wish to emphasize that the federal government does not wish to intervene or take sides in that conflict. We did not attempt to mediate. We have left both provincial governments fight it out in court and did nothing to support one party rather than the other. In fact, we feel that both parties have much to lose in carrying on that confrontation. After ten years of legal proceedings the problem is still not resolved and in the meantime there has been no other development on the Quebec North Shore or on the Churchill River. Every year over the past ten years, the people of Newfoundland and Quebec have been losing hundreds of million dollars in revenue because their governments have been unable to come to an agreement.

Each year, thousands of construction jobs in Quebec or Newfoundland have been lost or have not been created, because the provincial governments could not agree about the development of the Churchill River or other rivers on the Quebec North Shore and for ten years the governments and people of Newfoundland and Quebec have been the real losers. God knows that right now they would be very pleased with the few thousands jobs the construction of dams on either the North Shore or on the Churchill River could create for them. Unfortunately, both provincial governments have wasted the last two years over legal proceedings and squabbles, which have doubtless helped a number of lawyers earn a living but has done little to provide jobs for construction workers.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that whatever the verdict may be in the actions in abeyance, nobody will be the winner. In the medium term, I would say that the apparent victory of either government may eventually turn against its best interests. I say this with full knowledge of the facts and as sincerely as possible. If the federal government were to intervene in that matter, it would only be to try to bring both parties together because we firmly believe that negotiation is the best answer.

A negotiated agreement involving mutually acceptable compromises would certainly prove more beneficial to the citizens of both Newfoundland and Quebec than any legal victory that could only result in bitterness and frustration. A negotiated agreement would result in many long-lasting advantages. The consequences of a confrontation would poison the atmosphere.

We have contacted both provincial governments and offered to help them resume negotiations on an agreed-upon basis. Here and now, Mr. Speaker, we repeat our offer. We do not want to interfere or intervene in any way, but we suggest again to both governments that if they feel that the Government of Canada can play a useful role towards reaching a negotiated agreement between them, we would do the utmost to help the governments of these neighbouring provinces get together again. I should like to emphasize that these two clauses of Bill C-108 apparently have been received very favourably by a majority of the House. In fact, during this most unfortunate break in our proceedings caused by the Progressive Conservative Party, the hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes), the energy critic of the Progressive Conservative Party, confirmed the relevance of these two clauses on an open line program. I should like to repeat here the statement which was made by the energy critic of the Progressive Conservative Party. Here is what the member for Calgary West said, and I quote:

Yes—

—sorry, from Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre)—

The energy critic of the Progressive Conservative Party made the following statement:

Yes, that's a part of the bill that I would recommend to my caucus. I am ready to recommend to my party caucus not to delay for any length of time this part of the bill, but on the contrary to deal with it as expeditiously as possible.

I should like to repeat that those are the very words he used:

• (1600)

Yes, that's a part of the bill that I would recommend to my caucus.

This statement by the hon. member who is the energy critic of the Progressive Conservative Party is perfectly clear and we hope that our consideration of these clauses will not last forever. Before I conclude, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make our position clear on this issue, if I may. In my previous remarks, I have tried to show the situation as it really is in this bill which is now before the House, a situation which I should like to summarize again. First of all, I want to insist that the provisions of the bill which is now before the House are consistent with the powers vested in the Parliament of Canada in the area of international and interprovincial trade. Nobody has yet suggested that the Parliament of Canada lacked the authority to legislate in this respect. As a matter of fact, it is one of the responsibilities of Parliament to ensure that free international and interprovincial trade exists in Canada. Parliament must see to it that there is no impediment to international and interprovincial trade and that there is no barrier, actual or symbolic, to the free flow of goods between our provinces. If the Parliament of Canada did not have that power, it might be inferred that, to all intents and purposes, the country does not exist. That power is a basic and fundamental element of the very existence of a country worthy of the name. Therefore, the authority, the jurisdiction and the