

right to initiate a project but a right to attach conditions to the development of the project. I think there is no easier way to look at that than to look at what happened not long ago when the National Energy Board, a child of the federal government, acting within the jurisdiction legally given to it by this parliament, said to the producers of natural gas in the province of Alberta "You may indeed produce gas, but the limitation we place upon you is that it cannot be exported". In a mixed jurisdiction, that is the way this sort of thing operates.

In making his statement, the minister indulged in a little sophistry. I think he has been standing too close to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin), who is a master of sophistry, and a little intellectual osmosis has developed. It is true that the right to initiate any project for the development of power lies exclusively within a province but subject to the right of the federal government, or institutions developed under federal jurisdiction, to place certain obstacles or conditions which must be met before a plan can proceed and before the energy which has been developed can be exported. I do not think the minister will deny that to be the fact. Any federal government which refuses to accept that proposition and refuses to act upon it if it is considered essential, is denying its responsibility under the constitution of this country.

The hon. minister referred to the importance of this subject. It is, of course, an important subject and that is borne out by the fact that two other ministers, as well as other members on the government side, are going to speak in this debate. Then, if this is so, why did we have to wait until the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) was able to persuade the Chair that this matter was important enough that the business of the house should be interrupted for a debate? Why did the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien), the minister who has just spoken, the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis) or the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson), each of whom has some responsibility, not speak for the government or make a statement on motions? I ask them to tell the House precisely what their position is and what the government intends to do on this issue. I think they have a duty to this House in the exercise of their collective responsibility to make known to the country from time to time where they stand on important issues, and not wait until the opposition, in pursuance of its duty, drags these statements out of them.

One has sympathy and understanding, Mr. Speaker, for the desire of the Province of Quebec or any province to develop its industries, to develop its resources and to try to provide an increase in its standard of living through any of these means. It is proper for governments to do this, and I for one would never want to do anything which would interfere with the right of the Province of Quebec, the Province of Ontario and the Province of Alberta to so proceed. I think that must be the basic point of our discussion.

• (1520)

Today we realize more and more that our resources are not inexhaustible. We know that steps taken by governments and corporations, private or public, in the develop-

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ment of these resources can lead to consequences which may not have been foreseen originally but which may have serious detrimental effects upon future generations of Canadians. If we do not draw these consequences to the attention of the government—I am speaking not only of the federal government but of provincial governments—and make known the knowledge that we have obtained, we shall be abdicating our responsibilities with respect to development projects of this kind.

My hon. friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) has objectively and reasonably put forward grounds to show that this question must be examined by parliament. I intend to deal with one aspect of the matter, that is, the responsibility of the federal government under the Navigable Waters Protection Act. I shall speak about what this government should do and what it has failed to do. While so doing I will yield to temptation and show, by illustrating what happened on another occasion, precisely how governments and the people can get into serious trouble when they neglect to abide by the provisions laid down in a particular and important piece of legislation.

I will not take up the time of the House by reciting the legislation. It is well known; it has been discussed in the House and has been the subject of questions. We know today, from answers given by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) with respect to two bridges which were constructed or are being constructed by the corporation of the province of Quebec charged with responsibility for the project, that an application has been made under the Navigable Waters Protection Act. There is another bridge with respect to which approval may not have been given. One must also consider the extent to which these bridges and other works will interfere with the free flow of the river.

I will quote a highly qualified witness to confirm the correctness of my statement regarding the necessity for complying with the Navigable Waters Protection Act in these matters. Speaking about the Moran hydroelectric development in British Columbia, the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Davis), on page 9 of a news release dated March 1, 1971, said as follows:

And what do I mean by that? Well, the Fraser River is a major salmon river. It is also navigable. It therefore comes under two federal acts, the federal Fisheries Act and the federal Navigable Waters Protection Act. Before a dam could be built at Moran, B.C. Hydro would have to get a permit from the Federal Department of Transport under the Navigable Waters Protection Act. And before it could begin construction it would also have to satisfy the federal Minister of Fisheries that there will be adequate provision for fish passages and so on.

The minister then quoted sections of the Fisheries Act. I agree with what he said: it is right, it is sensible and it is the law. The law must be complied with in every province of this country. It was not complied with a number of years ago in the case of the Peace River. May I recapitulate the facts.

In the early part of the 1950s a Swedish industrialist, Axel Wenner-Gren, applied to the British Columbia government for a permit with regard to the feasibility study and ultimate construction of a dam across the Peace River near Hudson Hope. He hoped that this would lead to exploration and development of natural resources in a large part of the trench of the Rocky Mountains. Ultimate-