

Northern Affairs and National Resources

Of course the minister and his officials may initiate plans, but as to providing for the carrying out of these plans that must be with the authority of the governor in council and with the co-operation of other departments of the government.

Mr. Macdonnell: I should have made it clear that I appreciated that point, but I still think there is a question here. I quite realize the minister is limited by the words he quoted in relation to section 7, but I still suggest that the responsibility for initiating plans is very important indeed and I question whether it was intended that the new department could relieve all other departments of the initiative in formulating plans for the conservation and development of the matters primarily under their control. That seems to me to be what this section says.

It is quite true that they could not be carried to completion without consultation with other people; nevertheless if we assume there is something which it is considered ought to be originated in the Department of Transport, and if we assume that at a certain time there is criticism raised because it was not done, it seems to me the Department of Transport can say, "We had no duty except to consider plans brought to us by the new department".

Mr. Lesage: I am sorry but that is not the way I read the section. "The minister may formulate plans for the conservation and development of the resources of Canada." That does not mean other ministers cannot do that as well.

Mr. Adamson: Would it not clarify the issue if, after "resources of Canada", the words "as designated through section 5 of the act" were added?

Mr. Lesage: Mr. Chairman, I do not believe I can accept this amendment, because that would be limiting the initiating of plans in the department to the fields which are mentioned in section 5, while as a matter of fact, *de facto*, when initiating plans for the development or conservation of resources it is possible and perhaps unavoidable that those who are making the plans will touch on fields other than those covered by section 5.

The hon. member for Greenwood just gave an example. It might very well be that in the department some plans will be initiated for the conservation of water resources, and account will have to be taken of the navigation possibilities if they are navigable waters. Where these plans are initiated in the department, and cover matters affecting navigable waters, they could not be carried

[Mr. Lesage.]

out except after consultation with the Department of Public Works. But nothing prevents the Department of Public Works itself or the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Winters) from initiating plans for navigable waters which at a certain moment will touch also on conservation problems. Then the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources will be consulted. It seems quite clear to my mind.

Mr. Macdonnell: I appreciate the force of what the minister has said with regard to the word "may". I think there is a real point there. Perhaps that could be answered in this way. Does the minister consider that this wording in no way removes any of the onus from any of the present departments to formulate plans for the conservation and development of resources which are primarily under their control? He does not think this wording will relieve them of any of the responsibility which they now have?

Mr. Lesage: I am convinced of that.

Mr. Green: There is one change in section 7 as compared with section 7 of the Department of Resources and Development Act, in that the words "plans for public works and improvements" have been deleted. Can the minister tell us the significance of that change?

Mr. Lesage: This change was made under the act which allows the transfer of duties from one department to another by order in council. The changes were made by order in council when the present Minister of Public Works was appointed to his post and I took his place in the Department of Resources and Development. It was then decided under this order in council that housing, public works and improvements and the trans-Canada highway would come under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Public Works. It was also decided at the time that the national film board would be the responsibility of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. This was explained the other day by the Prime Minister when he said that he wanted to relieve the new minister of as many outside duties as possible so he could give his main attention to the northland.

Mr. Green: In this explanation the other day I think the Prime Minister dealt with responsibility for the trans-Canada highway and housing, but not for public works, as I remember it. What I should like to know from the minister is whether this new plan of taking away from his department the power to construct public works is a general government policy which will apply to all departments, or does that change apply only in so far as his own department is concerned?