

*Northern Inland Waters Bill*

Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene). I also say that the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis) has a better attitude than the minister of energy. Certainly this appears to be the case in light of some of the statements he has made in this House. For this reason I do not really mind the northern affairs minister exercising some control of the water resources in our northern areas.

As a member of the northern affairs committee I hope to study the bill clause by clause when it goes to the standing committee. There we will have the chance to look at all of its aspects and to question the minister in detail. At the present time I am looking forward to hearing the minister's explanation and clarification of some of the points that have been raised in the debate.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The minister's participation now will close the debate.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Is there not an amendment, Mr. Speaker? I believe, therefore, that the minister is not closing the debate.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank all hon. members who have participated in what I think has been a good debate. As far as the amendment moved by the official opposition is concerned, as I said earlier the bill relates to management of water in the north and is not related to exportation of water. As the last speaker pointed out, geographically there are not too many places to go if we want to export water from the Northwest Territories, but before any water can be diverted from the north across the border certain legislation on the statute books must be complied with.

I am surprised that the opposition is not aware of the fact that in order to cope with this kind of situation, in 1955, when the Premier of British Columbia wanted to move a little too quickly in this particular field, the government passed an act respecting the construction, operation and maintenance of international river improvements. This act was designed for the purpose of making sure that the exportation of water is controlled by the federal government.

**Mr. Barnett:** Mr. Speaker, would the minister permit a question? I well recall that piece of legislation going through the House, but is

the minister not aware that, despite passage of this legislation, we exported Columbia River water to the United States, and with the agreement of the federal government?

**Mr. Chrétien:** Yes, Mr. Speaker; but because the legislation existed it was necessary for the government to discuss the matter in the House of Commons and to sign a treaty with the United States. The main concern put forward by members today is that the government inform the people of any action it might take in this regard. In the case of the Columbia River Treaty a full debate was held in the House of Commons. Negotiations were held with the provincial government and the United States authorities.

Although the hon. member may not have agreed with the signing of the treaty, he cannot say he was unaware of what happened. I was here in those days and I know that the hon. member spent a lot of time, both in committee and in the House of Commons, trying to put across his point of view. Unfortunately for him he was unable to convince the majority of the members of the House that the Columbia River Treaty should not be ratified.

If water were to be diverted to the United States from southern rivers in Canada, the terms of the act passed in 1955 would have to be complied with before the water could cross the border. Even though the bill before the House does not deal with the international aspects of water diversion, there is legislation on the books to restrain any action that the board might take which the government considered not in the best interests of the country.

Another point raised by many hon. members today was that they felt the bill was a duplication of the Canada water act. I think the legislation before the House tonight complements the Canada water act. There is a presumption in the Canada water act that a regional or provincial body will be set up for purposes of local management. It is equally vital that there be such a body established in the north, especially when one realizes that this is a region in which one-sixth of the world's supply of fresh water is to be found. More than one-half of Canada's water supply lies in the Arctic. At the present time the Arctic is unpolluted. I apologize to no one for taking steps to ensure that the north remains unpolluted.

**Mr. Stanfield:** I hope your colleague agrees with you.