

Supply

impact studies being carried out in connection with James Bay and, I presume, other projects. He indicated that this information is going to be available prior to the beginning of construction. This is the very point which our group and other environmentalists have been making. It is stupid to start on a project, spend tens of millions of dollars getting it ready and then finding out that an environmental impact study shows that immense damage is going to be done. At that time you are committed to the project.

The point that we are making is that these impact studies should be made first. They should be properly evaluated. The project can then proceed on the basis of the evaluation coming out of the study. With regard to James Bay and other projects, this procedure has been reversed. The cart has been put before the horse. After the Quebec government has spent tens of millions of dollars putting in roads, setting up base camps, building bridges over rivers and doing a variety of things, it is a *fait accompli*. The people of Quebec and Canada have taken another top-notch shellacking as far as the environment is concerned. This is why we are protesting and why we say the government has been negligent in not pushing this more effectively and vigorously.

Mr. Davis: Mr. Chairman, I can understand the hon. member's frustration. I notice that he is commenting on projects which are either largely or entirely within provincial jurisdiction. The James Bay project is novel to this extent; the Quebec government has asked the federal government to join in an environmental appraisal before the construction of dams begins. I urge him to apply the same criteria to the Churchill diversion in Manitoba.

• (1250)

[Translation]

Mr. Laprise: Mr. Chairman, I listened with great interest to the debate on the James Bay question which has been taking place for a few days, and I wonder whether this problem is put frankly. As a matter of fact, I doubt it.

According to questions which are asked and objections which are made to the government and to the minister, most hon. members seem to be opposed to the implementation of the James Bay hydro project. In a way, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the fact that this project may have been implemented 20 years too late but without any preparation, without any study. The minister and the federal government are in a bad position if they want to oppose the James Bay hydro project, on the strength of their authority under the Constitution, for this will immediately give rise to a war with Quebec separatists saying once more that the federal government is taking exception to the growth of the province of Quebec.

With the experience of other developments as important as the James Bay hydro project as well as the environmental damage and disorders of all kinds which resulted, whether we think of the Peace River hydro project or of similar developments in Asia or Africa, I do not think that we can do any better in Quebec than elsewhere.

Mr. Chairman, it is obvious—and I take as a basis some reports made by scientists—that these hydro projects will have serious effects not only in terms of climate but

[Mr. Harding.]

especially in terms of migration of fish, of birds and particularly, which is worse, of men, women and children who have been occupying these territories for generations.

In fact, work has not started yet but preparation has begun and Indians living in these areas have already felt some changes in their way of life. There are rightful complaints about the effects of that development for the power of those who need the power is known, these are the Americans. It is known that power generated in the James Bay area will be used to supply American plants.

Mr. Chairman, I was going to say that the Americans are financing these projects. Instead I should say that the Americans are lending money to the province of Quebec for the execution of these projects as a fairly high rate of interest so that there will be no profits from the sale of electricity by the province. Our natural resources will be sent out to a foreign country.

Mr. Fortin: And we are going to lose money.

Mr. Laprise: Perhaps we will lose out.

They had to honour an election promise made in 1970 and try to create those 100,000 jobs. There are many Quebecers involved. The only advantages resulting from the James Bay projects are jobs and high salaries, even though gangsters have taken over most of the administrative jobs.

Now, I wonder whether the federal government is in a position to interrupt this project or if the Quebec government should establish the extent of its usefulness.

It may be already too late to take adequate measures, but the Quebec people will bear judgment on the government that launched the James Bay hydroelectric project.

[English]

Mr. Peters: Despite my colleague's eagerness to go to lunch I should like to ask one other question. It relates to a totally different field. To what extent is the department involved in the development of sewage lagoons as a method of sewage treatment, especially in northern areas? What environmental studies have been undertaken in this connection?

I was interested to see that one of the government departments recently put out a statement to the effect that the evaporation factor in northern areas was something like 30 to 35 inches a year. This figure related to the mid-Canada corridor stretching from the constituency of my hon. friend from Skeena, to the Maritimes. Rainfall varies, of course, along this corridor but in my own area it amounts to some 37 inches a year which would leave an excess of some four to eight inches of liquid in the lagoons.

Has the department done any work in this field, or can the intention to clean up the Ottawa River system be regarded as just a smokescreen? In the area with which I am familiar the lagoons are flushed out every spring when the ice goes and the contents are discharged into the river. I should like to know whether in the discussions being held with the provinces the department is drawing attention to alternative types of sewage treatment which would supersede what is obviously an elementary expedi-