

Northern Canada Power Commission Act

cabinet on major expenditures of over \$50,000. This is one more restraint that is removed. It is not so much the removal of the restraint that should be reviewed. I suggest to the House that what should be reviewed is the direct invitation to over-spend. Once there was the insurance, or the requirement, that costs should not exceed revenues, relating specifically to projected projects. Now there is not that insurance, so there is a clear invitation to over-spend. There is no guarantee that members of the Northern Canada Power Commission will accept that invitation to over-spend, but there is the invitation and the possibility.

If the Minister is going to oppose this very progressive and sensible amendment by the hon. member for Yukon he should make it clear why he is inviting the Northern Canada Power Commission to over-spend. He will have to justify that invitation to over-spend in order properly to convince the House that the insurance clause which has been in the act since the commission began should now be removed.

I spoke earlier during this debate, when the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Sauvé) was in the House, about the dangers that could be involved for the whole of Canada, particularly for those of us who are concerned about environmental consequences, if there are too few restraints placed upon the Northern Canada Power Commission. As it stands, there is in this bill the capacity of the commission to undertake literally any kind of hydro project. As we have learned in parts of Canada where ecology is perhaps more impervious than it is in parts of the territory we are talking about, hydro electric projects can be dangerous and can have consequences beyond those that we can foresee. That is a factor we must bear in mind when we are considering the wisdom of removing from the Northern Canada Power Commission the restraint that has, to this point, required it to generate, by its rates, revenues which are equal to the costs the commission incurs.

For those two reasons, first, the democratic reason of requiring a reference to the elected council and not simply to an appointed commissioner and, second, the insurance element that will require rates equal to the costs involved in projects, I earnestly hope that the minister and others on the government side will accept the wisdom of the amendment proposed by my colleague.

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Madam Speaker, after some discussion with the minister we have arrived at a compromise in respect of Motion No. 5. At this time I should like to move the following amendment:

That Motion No. 5 to amend Bill C-13, an act to amend the Northern Canada Power Commission Act, be amended by deleting the words "the proposed rates that in the opinion of the Commission would produce revenue equal to the costs specified in Section 10" and the following substituted therefor:

"the effect on the schedule or ranges of rates established for a rate zone under Section 10."

As I said, this is a compromise that has been reached. It is not exactly what we wanted but it is satisfactory to us and the minister, and I trust it will be approved and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): The question is on the amendment by the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr.

[Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain).]

Neil). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said amendment?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

An hon. Member: No.

Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, I should simply like to indicate that we have discussed this compromise and it is acceptable to us.

Mr. Nielsen: You should speak to your backbenchers over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Shall the amendment carry?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Amendment (Mr. Neil) agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Shall the motion as amended carry?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion No. 5 (Mr. Nielsen), as amended, agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): We will now return to Motion No. 4 in the name of the hon. member for Yukon.

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon) moved:

That Bill C-13, an act to amend the Northern Canada Power Commission Act, be amended by adding to Clause 4, next after line 5 on page 3 thereof, the following:

10A. The Commission shall be deemed to be a public utility within the meaning and for the purposes of any ordinance of the Yukon Territory or the Northwest Territories that provides for the regulation of the operation of any system, works, plant or equipment for the production, transmission, delivery or furnishing of electricity and the provisions of any such ordinance shall apply mutatis mutandis to the commission.

He said: Madam Speaker, it should be clear even to the government whip that the purpose of all our efforts, here and in the committee, has been to take the Parliament of Canada out of the business of setting rates for my electric light bill in the Yukon and putting that power where it belongs, in the hands of the public utilities commission.

An hon. Member: Then the power is going to go off out there.

Mr. Nielsen: We have been turned off by the government in Ottawa many times before. Surely it makes sense that the Government of Canada should not be in the business of setting rates for my electric light bill in the Yukon, or anybody's electric light bill in the Northwest Territories. Surely the proper body to be doing that, as is the case everywhere else, is a public utilities board.

The minister has made the argument in the past that this situation does not prevail in the provinces enumerated by him this afternoon. Those are provinces which have machinery set up to look after this sort of thing. We are denied that kind of machinery by virtue of the strictures placed upon us in having this controlled by Ottawa. All this amendment would seek to do in this one small sphere is take the headache away from the governor in council or