

Mr. Dinsdale: I said I was in touch with our counterparts, and the federal power commission is not the counterpart of Canadian ministers. At least I hope it isn't. I am sure the minister knows what I am talking about, if he only wants to understand.

● (5:10 p.m.)

It might be that the government's equivocation and vacillation just a year ago on the matter of the looping of the trans-Canada pipe line to the east aroused the ire of the F. P. C. and this is why it is making it so difficult for us at the present time. The minister knows that the government reversed itself in those very important negotiations, and yesterday I was very pleased to hear him defending the policy we recommended at that time and which was ultimately adopted by the government.

Let me conclude my observations on gas and oil by saying it is not enough to maintain happy relations, mutual respect and confidence between our two nations, to report from time to time that L.B.P. and L.B.J. have met at Hyannis Port, ushering in a honeymoon period, or have met down on the ranch and everything is wonderful between our two countries. We must have continuing contact and continuing consultation.

This is all we are asking the government to do. We want a positive statement clearly setting out its intentions and its objectives. Surely the consultations that were established back in the 1960's and the meetings which became necessary with the United States ministers in establishing the National Energy Board can be retained on a continuing basis so that we can avoid the sort of "High Noon" confrontation that is represented in the situation which faces Canada and its National Energy Board at this particular moment.

I trust that the government will yet take advantage of this opportunity to support members of the opposition—the point of view on this side of the house seems to be pretty solid—in urging the responsible political powers in the United States to be reasonable in these matters in the best interests of all concerned. It is not only in the field of gas and oil that continuous consultation is necessary. We also have international water problems. I know that during the days when I had some ministerial responsibility this was another matter we discussed with cabinet members in Washington. It could well be that in days which are not too far away the economic use of water will become even more important

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than the exploitation of our gas and oil. For example, at present there is much talk about the billions of dollars in water which flow each year out of one province, the province of Alberta, and yet we have hardly begun to discuss these matters with the United States. We have not even co-ordinated our own domestic policies on water resources.

One of the basic recommendations which came out of the resources for tomorrow conference was that the government of Canada should set up an advisory committee on water in order to achieve consultation and co-ordination on policy right across the country. True enough, we have the resource ministers council backed by its secretariat, but that council cannot do everything. Unfortunately there has been a tendency on the part of the government to use the resource ministers council as an excuse in the same way as it has used the provincial governments. Time and time again we have heard it said that Ottawa cannot do anything because the responsibility rests with the provinces. Now we are hearing it said that Ottawa cannot do anything because the matter is in the hands of the resource ministers council.

In addition to the recommendation that the resource ministers council be established, another specific recommendation was that a national advisory committee on water be set up to deal with the problems outlined by experts on water pollution and also to deal with the very important question of the economic development and exploitation of this important resource. I do not think I need to go any farther in that regard.

Mr. Pepin: May I ask the hon. member whether he is aware that last week an agreement was signed creating a Saskatchewan and Nelson river board?

Mr. Dinsdale: That brings up the matter of the Prairie Water Conservation Board activities. The minister's question has provided me with the opportunity to deal with this point. Those negotiations started back about 1961. I am amazed that it has taken the government so long to come to a conclusion on these matters. I thought they were all set in 1963 to have this important study in respect of the Nelson river water basin concluded. The other day the minister tabled in the house the agreement negotiated over the period 1961 to 1967. That is not what one might call making very rapid progress in the field of water conservation.