

*Supply—Forestry*

been particularly interested in the conservation and development of our natural resources—I have moved motions urging governments of the day to call a federal-provincial conference for the development of a national forest policy in co-operation with the provinces. On every occasion annually, when my motion was the subject of debate in the house, in ordinary language it was loved to death. However, on February 12, 1958, the former prime minister, now leader of the official opposition, announced that a national conference on conservation would be called. We in this group were delighted with this announcement, as were a good many other people too. The former government did do some very worthwhile things, and I think we should give them credit for them. This is true particularly in the field of natural resources and agriculture. They got on to rather thin ice on some other subjects, but I will leave that to another occasion.

As the result of this announcement the provincial premiers were invited to participate in preliminary discussions for the planning of such a conference. I am very glad to say that all the provinces responded favourably and the first meeting of the national steering committee, consisting of ministers from all provinces and from the federal government, was held on November 17, 1958. These were the first steps taken toward the development of a national policy. At this meeting it was agreed to hold another conference on Canada's renewable resources. A research secretariat worked for almost three years to plan and prepare for this conference, and I followed the course of that steering committee with great interest.

The resources for tomorrow conference was held in Montreal from October 23 to 28, 1961. Some 700 delegates representing federal and provincial governments, universities, industry, and numerous organizations across Canada, attended. I think it was an historic event in the development of policy with respect to natural resources in Canada. This conference came to a number of important conclusions, and I mention these, Mr. Chairman, because there are some hon. members in the committee not well acquainted with the developments over recent years with respect to this policy. It was found, as many of us had contended for years, that there was a lack of co-ordination between governments and also between departments in governments. I have noticed this lack of co-ordination on occasion between the wild life branch both in Ottawa and in British Columbia and, say, the forestry service. This frequently occurs. It has also occurred in the Department of Agriculture in cases where it plans without consultation, and things like that. This lack of co-operation has created

[Mr. Herridge.]

serious deficiencies in policy in resource development and management. While the conference recognized the existing system of Canadian federalism, in which the ownership of natural resources largely rests with the provinces, it also recognized that fiscal monetary and trade policies are the direct responsibility of the federal government.

The interesting thing in the development of this conference was the clear understanding almost from the first of the responsibilities of the respective governments in this field. The conference developed a much greater appreciation of the responsibilities of federal and provincial governments and the need for a continual exchange of views between governments and their administrative personnel. The members of this group have dealt with that aspect of the problem over and over again throughout the years. To this end it was agreed by the participants to the conference that there should be some provision for a continuing review of resource policy and problems between federal and provincial governments. Therefore, these governments later agreed to the formation of a resource council. The establishment of this council, which was another interesting step in the development of this policy, was announced on February 6, 1962 following the final meeting of the resources for tomorrow conference steering committee. This has set an example for other departments, in my opinion, Mr. Chairman.

The Canadian council of resource ministers represents a new co-operative approach between federal and provincial governments to the problems of resource development. The council was established on the basis of equal participation of federal and provincial governments with a rotating chairmanship—an excellent arrangement. This arrangement provides for the first time in Canadian history an intergovernmental forum within which resource policies can be studied and co-ordinated. I notice that the minister in his opening remarks mentioned that the resources for tomorrow conference had been a unifying influence, and anyone who has followed the course of the conference, and of the council appointed since, realizes that it has been a splendid unifying influence around the common objective.

Recently in Montreal the Hon. Rene Levesque, of the resources ministers council, said that effective co-operation in the development and the uses of our natural resources through federal-provincial co-operation could be the most effective guarantor of Canadian unity in a workable confederation of provinces. We agree wholeheartedly with this statement of the minister, and endorse it completely.