

and without direction are often not as productive as the lands which they have left. Consequently the present government probably faces in the northern part of the western prairies a problem which will become more acute as time passes. In this long-range planning the government of the day will consider, I hope, the potentialities of Canada, the preservation of our natural resources, and the rehabilitation of the agricultural region in which soil erosion and so on have occurred in recent years.

I am glad that, if appearances may be trusted, a portion of the policy we have long advocated is embodied in this bill. It seems to me that there is a tendency throughout the world to make intelligent plans that we and future generations can follow. If the intention of this particular paragraph is to do just that, I believe it will be indeed a step in the right direction. But unless that is done the paragraph becomes more or less meaningless. I doubt, too, the success of a plan of this kind which will be placed in the hands of a committee of this type. It seems to me that if we are going to plan for the future we should have scientists, technicians and economists whose particular duty it would be to understand the resources of the country and to recommend to the government of the day and to parliament a long-range scheme in connection with the utilization of our resources. But in so far as this measure visualizes something of that sort it is a step in the right direction, provided it is not a mere catch phrase, and if it is made effective, the minister will have accomplished something that will be of benefit in the years to come.

Mr. MITCHELL: I notice that under this paragraph the commission shall recommend to the minister comprehensive measures constituting long-range plans of national development which may be proceeded with or discontinued from time to time as conditions may determine. I should like a little further explanation from the minister as to the reason for putting this paragraph in the bill, and I should like to know definitely whether this is considered a sort of safety-valve against future emergencies that may arise. I should like to have it more thoroughly explained. What is the intention in connection with this provision for discontinuance, particularly?

Mr. BENNETT: In order that the minister may not have to speak twice on the matter I should like to make now an observation which will not detain the committee for any great length of time. The whole problem of the conservation of our resources has

engaged the attention of successive parliaments, and the question of a planned economy with respect to the development of our resources is, of course, not new in Canada. This is a federal union, and we have never been able to get away from the fact that this parliament cannot control the quantity of nickel that may be produced in Ontario in a given year, for example, or the extent to which our forest wealth may be lessened by the cutting of timber in British Columbia. All these matters are solely within the jurisdiction of the provincial legislatures, and when we talk about planning in this parliament we can plan only within the ambit of our powers. Those powers do not extend far enough to enable us in any sense to control the extent of production from our natural resources, except possibly as we may limit the quantity of goods that may be sent out of the country.

Recently, for instance, a distinguished British civil servant, who was also a member of parliament and who occupied a high position for a time, made a report upon the coal industry of Alberta. He found what we all know, that too many mines are being developed, a little spot here and a little spot there, in great part not with modern methods, with, as a result, overproduction which is injurious to the industry as a whole. Take, for example, the great forest wealth of British Columbia. If one reads in a newspaper the exports of lumber and compares them with any possible increase that can be brought about through reforestation, one realizes that we are facing the destruction of our forest wealth within a reasonable time. How short or how long that time may be depends upon one factor over which man has never had complete control, namely the fire hazard. That has been dealt with time and again in this parliament, but we have never been able to take effective legislation action because our legislative powers did not permit us to do so. Another example is the question of soil erosion in the western provinces. All we can do is make a grant in aid to assist in preventing such erosion. We may say that we shall not provide money except under certain conditions, but that is regarded as an interference with the rights of the provinces, and these difficulties at once arise.

It will be within the memory of many people that a commission on conservation was set up in Canada. There was a great deal of criticism with regard to certain things that commission did, because of the places at which it carried on its operations and the kind of resources to which its activities were limited, but it was an endeavour on