

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

they should give particular attention to the bills that have been adopted by the province in this regard. I believe an even more encompassing bill is now in force in British Columbia, and I hope we might have a recommendation from them as to an effective method for absentee balloting for the voting of not only those physically incapacitated but others who, for a variety of reasons, may not be able to be present at the polls on either voting day or at the advance poll.

I have one or two comments regarding Bill 38. I am surprised it is confined only to the physically incapacitated and does not extend the franchise even further. I would like to be satisfied, which I am not by Bill 38, that the anonymity of the ballot, the secrecy of the ballot, will not suffer in the course of the mail ballot. Subject to that I have no hesitation in recommending the proposal to the members of the committee, and I am hopeful that perhaps before the House rises at Christmas time we may have a definitive report from the committee including a favourable recommendation along this line.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Hear, hear.

NAVIGATION—MACKENZIE RIVER—INQUIRY
AS TO AGREEMENT WITH BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, the reason I appear tonight is not so much because I am dissatisfied with the answer I received from the minister but because under the rules a member who is not satisfied with the ruling of Mr. Speaker may raise the point at this time. I say this with some deference, but the problem I raised and the manner in which I raised my question was on a par with questions being asked yesterday in connection with the port of Vancouver. These questions were close and I intended my question to be close. It is for that reason I sought to speak on this occasion tonight.

The problem of navigation on the Mackenzie River affects far fewer people than does the situation in the port of Vancouver, but for those people along the Mackenzie River and part of the Northwest Territories it is far more important. That is why I insisted upon the problem being ventilated. There is a problem in that area. I do not suppose many hon. members are aware of what has happened, but with a great fanfare the province of British Columbia constructed a huge hydro-electric dam on the Peace River at Partridge

Mountain, upstream from Hudson Hope. At the time the chief engineers on this project warned that the hydro-electric scheme tied in with, shall we say, a B.C.-Pacific coast ridge, could theoretically and quite effectively cut off all the water downstream in order to fulfil the requirements for hydro-electric power.

● (10:20 p.m.)

It must be remembered that under the Navigable Waters Protection Act, protection must be provided. The act envisages protection of downstream interests when obstructions on navigable rivers are erected. This protection is not limited to those years when there is sufficient rainfall and adequate water resources. You have to take it by and large, good years and bad. It is said that this year there was a deficiency in rainfall. But what we saw, Mr. Speaker, was a deficiency in the water levels of the Athabasca River, as evidenced this spring. There was a deficiency in the level of the Mackenzie River, particularly this fall, for navigation purposes downstream, to such an extent that a crown company, Northern Transportation, had to make a public statement that it would have to undertake many hundreds of thousands of dollars of expenditure to clear the Sans Sault rapids for navigation purposes if it were to fulfil its contracts in the forthcoming year, to justify the fleet it now has and to which it committed itself in the future.

The company stated that, as a result of the government's cutback in expenditure, the Department of Public Works could not clear this obstacle to navigation. Barges travelled downstream at 40 per cent load at a time of year when there was unprecedented development on the Arctic slope and a real opportunity to develop Canada's portion of the Arctic.

I am not blaming the minister; I blame the faceless people in this administration who have not the smallest conception of what transportation in remote areas of Canada means to developing businesses. At a time when we are asserting our sovereignty in the Arctic and trying to develop new resources, the government makes across-the-board cutbacks. No doubt the estimates of the minister's department have been cut back, and as I say I do not blame him. I blame those faceless members in Ottawa who sit in those comfortable pews and have not the slightest idea what is happening in the north.

I want to know just what is happening in the matter of navigation on the Mackenzie