

this commission, to be treated in the same fashion as any Crown corporation by giving such wide and sweeping powers to it without any control.

● (1610)

It would be different if parliament had to be asked to approve estimates to keep this kind of commission operating, but even that is not the case. We do not exercise any control in the estimates because once the commission has the powers which will be extended to it—if the government's bill goes through as it stands now—there will be no need to make provisions for estimates for the operation of this commission. The decision making process is complete in the commission in whatever it wishes to do.

Speaking as a member interested in the welfare of Canada as a whole, that is not the kind of power parliament would want to pass to an agency of the government, but speaking now as a Yukoner I find it even more offensive because that clause opens the door wide to an agency of the government here in Ottawa to do exactly what it pleases. Apart from the input of the member from the Yukon on the commission there is no legislative control whatsoever. That control does not reside in the cabinet, unless of course this provision is revoked at some time, and if the commission gets out of line it is not required to refer any such project to either of the commissioners in council of the territories. I think such reference would be a very desirable control to impose upon the activities of the commission. It would also be a very desirable step toward meaningful consultation with the people of each of the territories.

Even if this amendment were to say that the commission shall not undertake this specified list of things which it is authorized to undertake in subsection 3 of section 6 now, and even if it were to say that it is not authorized to do that until it has consulted with the respective commissioners in council of the two territories—not again making their approval mandatory—it would perhaps mean something. But here we are not only abolishing the requirement of the commission to account to cabinet, and through cabinet to parliament; we are abolishing the requirement of the commission to account at all except by way of an annual return.

That to me, as a Yukoner, is an extremely undesirable state of affairs. It would appear that the hon. member for Northwest Territories takes an entirely different view of things. He does not seem to believe that people in the Northwest Territories have any interest in being involved in the decision making process. But then, of course, he has aligned himself with the socialist group in this House, and perhaps this degree of state control to him is desirable. It certainly is not desirable in my western neck of the woods.

I am sure that upon a closer analysis the minister will see the dangers which are inherent. Perhaps he will not. He used to see all sorts of dangers when he was a member of parliament, but now that he is a minister perhaps he has blinkers on, and perhaps with his new responsibilities he cannot see the dangers any longer. He certainly saw the reasonableness of the last amendment, and perhaps after hearing what I have to say he will see some scintilla of a danger in what this amendment in the bill proposes. Even though he is new at his duties, perhaps he is so fed up with

#### *Northern Power Commission Act*

the idea that he should have any responsibility for the Northern Canada Power Commission that this is a very easy and quick way to get rid of it. His first step in that direction has been a laudable one.

For quite some time we on this side of the House have been saying that the idea of having his deputy minister as the chairman of the commission was extremely repugnant and should be abandoned. He has done that now, but I must say that he has not moved very far away from the position which existed when his deputy was the commission chairman, because he substituted for his deputy in that position an individual who is not *qua* individual but a person whose position is such that he might as well still be the deputy minister.

The real solution will not be found until the commission is separated from the department entirely and becomes truly a Crown Corporation. Then perhaps there might be some justification for an amendment such as the one we now have before us. If the commission were a separate entity, such as Air Canada, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, or the one which has been lost in limbo somewhere, Polymer Corporation, neither fish nor fowl, not really a part of CDC, or at least not at the moment—maybe the government will be getting around to curing that situation one of these days—one might be able to see some justification in this amendment, but here where the commission theoretically is still responsible to parliament through the minister, it ill behooves the government to wipe out any responsibility of the commission to report to parliament through the minister with respect to its fiscal operations.

The cabinet should at least retain some control over decisions which would involve not only northerners but all Canadians, and which could involve them substantially in terms of expenditure of public funds. After all, that is what they are—when the commission incurs an indebtedness, it is in the long run the Canadian government which is responsible for it.

As it now stands the amendment would permit the commission to embark upon a James Bay project if it so desired, with no power in the cabinet to veto it, if this bill goes through in its present form.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** You wouldn't want that, Judd.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Of course the minister could say that if the chairman of the commission and the two government appointed members did that, they would be fired. There is control there, but I do not believe that that is the kind of control parliament is entitled to, Mr. Speaker. Parliament is entitled to have the government, through the cabinet, account to the people of Canada for the activities of its agencies. This amendment would wipe all that out. The purpose of my amendment is to retain it.

It is my view that this \$50,000 figure in the existing legislation is perhaps too small. Certainly in today's atmosphere of inflation not very much can be accomplished with \$50,000. I would be quite amenable to having that figure raised substantially, to a quarter of a million dollars or even half a million dollars, to permit sufficient fiscal flexibility in the commission and to enable it to accomplish the task parliament expects it to do under the