

“wrapped up” I presume what is meant is that it would be signed. The report goes on to state this:

At first Mr. Roblin refused to answer opposition questions concerning a possible “upper limit” on federal cost sharing.

He insisted details of final negotiations had to remain secret.

I must say that this business of secrecy seems to have extended into a very wide field in these days. The report continues:

But he did have written agreement approving the cost sharing in principle.

I wonder whether the minister would tell us what this written agreement is, approving cost sharing in principle, what the principle is and whether the federal government has in fact put an upper limit on the expenditures it is prepared to make?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, the hon. member has spoken of two matters. With reference to his first observations, I wish to say very briefly that there was no bungling or ineptitude in relation to the treaty. The fact is that the government of British Columbia participated in all the negotiations and all of the steps leading up to the drafting of the treaty. They were parties to all of those steps and all of the agreements antecedent to the treaty. I wish to put that clearly on record in correction of the statements made by the hon. member.

With regard to the second matter he raised, may I say that there is no firm, written agreement signed yet, but it is expected that the agreement will be signed soon. The matter is a very important one and there have been discussions and negotiations over a period of time. We understand that we are close to the signing of the agreement. As to specific terms, I think it would not be appropriate for me to comment on terms until the matter emerges from the stage of negotiation and becomes a matter of a written agreement. The hon. member can be very sure that when the agreement has been entered into it will be made public.

Mr. Pickersgill: On that very point, Mr. Chairman, surely we can be told as much as Mr. Roblin told the Manitoba legislature. Mr. Roblin said, according to this statement which I am sure is accurate, that he did have a written agreement approving cost sharing in principle. Can the minister tell us what the nature of that agreement is? It is a written agreement and surely if the Manitoba legislature can be told this we can be told it. Mr. Roblin also indicated, though he did not precisely say, that there was an upper limit on the federal cost sharing. Surely the minister can tell us whether or not there is such a limit.

26207-1—165

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Obviously this is an essential term and one of the matters that has been under discussion, and it just is not appropriate to discuss terms that are under negotiation and discussion until the agreement has been concluded. I have tried to indicate that I do not think this will be long. The negotiations have reached quite an advanced stage but until the agreement has been signed I think the committee will appreciate why it is not appropriate to attempt to discuss views on particular terms.

Mr. Pickersgill: It seems to have taken a tremendously long time for these two Tory governments to get together about a matter that is very essential to the people of Manitoba and about which Mr. Roblin was very critical of his predecessors, who made a great deal more haste than he seems to have been able to make with his friends here in Ottawa.

Mr. Chevrier: The minister said it would not be proper to make known the terms of the agreement that the federal government has entered into with the government of the province of British Columbia and I agree that perhaps that is the right position. However, prior to the signing of the treaty between Canada and the United States there was certain information available and some sort of understanding, if there was no written agreement. If it is not possible for the minister to give the terms now, I wonder why he cannot tell the house how the agreement which is about to be signed or will be signed in the near future differs from that contained in the treaty which has not yet been ratified.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I think there is some confusion here. We have been talking about two different things. My remarks, which have been paraphrased by the hon. member, related to the negotiations between the government of Canada and the government of Manitoba in relation to the Winnipeg floodway system. We had been talking earlier about the Columbia treaty.

Mr. Chevrier: Perhaps I misunderstood the minister. Then there has been no agreement reached between the federal government and the province of British Columbia with reference to the Columbia river project.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Prior to the signing of the treaty the federal government fully understood that the government of the province was completely in accord with the terms of the treaty. The position having been taken by the government of British Columbia that they are not in accord, efforts have been made by me to arrive at an accord. That has been the aim of the federal government in the discussions I have been holding with Premier Bennett.