

it is the government that in the last analysis decides such matters, but at least there can be some public discussion of the matter, and some opportunity for the public at large to express itself. At the present time we are not granted that opportunity, in fact this is simply another instance in which, rightly or wrongly, we are getting away from the idea that parliament is the body that has authority with regard to the most important matters that concern this country. Apparently the house is to be sidetracked, neglected, ignored, the government claiming absolute right to decide these most important matters of public policy with scant regard to the wishes of the people as expressed through their chosen representatives. I do think the Prime Minister should make a statement to this house, even if for no other reason than to enlighten our ignorance and clear up any misconceptions that may generally prevail. I think we should have a statement from the Prime Minister with regard to the points we have raised to-day. I do not think it is too much to ask that the public should be informed very definitely with regard to the protection being given Canada in the matter of power export, the protection being given the bondholders, any action that is being taken by the government to reserve for Canada its fundamental rights in connection with this canal and any action that is being taken to safeguard the financial interests of this country. I know that some years ago my hon. friend the Secretary of State (Mr. Cahan), for whom in common with all hon. members of this house I have a very high regard, took the position that we must concede that this was entirely a provincial matter. I cannot concede that point, and it does not seem to me that the country is willing to concede it. I would rather take the position, as I did in the house two or three years ago, that the St. Lawrence river is on a different basis from many other streams and that the power developed there is also on a different basis from the power developed locally in other areas. I take it that the St. Lawrence is essentially a national and an international stream, and that under those circumstances we cannot deal with this matter in a provincial fashion. I think that unless we are careful this administration may surrender claims which ought not to be surrendered with regard to the effective control of this great river.

Mr. DUPUIS: Upon what authority is my hon. friend basing this opinion?

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I have given my authorities at some length in previous discussion. [Mr. Woodsworth.]

cussions, and I cannot see that there is any very useful purpose to be served by citing those authorities again. The hon. member will find them in the speeches of the hon. members who presented the case previously.

Mr. DUPUIS: It is not in the British North America Act.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Yes, it is in those portions of that act read only to-day by the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Garland).

Mr. DUPUIS: Does the hon. gentleman suggest that the British North America Act makes a difference between the St. Lawrence and other rivers?

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Yes, it does. It is all very well for the former Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) to shake his head; I heard him suggest a little while ago that these clauses in the British North America Act applied only to canals already in existence when the British North America Act was passed, but I do not think that position can be successfully maintained.

Mr. LAPOINTE: Would my hon. friend apply the same theory to the Niagara river, which is also navigable, and would he claim the developments which have been carried on there instead of leaving them under the control of the hydro commission of Ontario?

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Ultimately that claim may be made, but the Niagara river is in a different position.

Mr. LAPOINTE: Where does the hon. gentleman find that?

Mr. WOODSWORTH: There are two points I might mention, Mr. Speaker. One is that I think a very good case could be made out for the continuity of ownership of the canal, ever since the original grants were made to the Roberts. This canal has been changed; its location has been somewhat altered; certainly it has been enlarged and it has assumed an altogether different position in the public life of this country, but there were certain grants made in the very beginning which have continued through the years in one form or another, which it seems to me would offer a very strong presumption in favour of the rights of the dominion in connection with that canal. There is a recognition of this in the fact that certain rental payments are being made to the Dominion government to the present day.

Then there is the other aspect of the question. The St. Lawrence river is a navigable stream; it is proposed to make it part of an