

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

advise the committee whether his department or the dominion coal board have been in communication with the governments of the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia for the purpose of establishing large turbo generating plants at the pithead; and if such communication has taken place, has any consideration been given to proceeding with these plants?

Mr. Flynn: I do not know of any recent communication. Since my appointment I have not received any request of the kind mentioned by the hon. member. I do not know whether there was any such request before my appointment or whether it is under consideration, but since my appointment no such request has been received.

Mr. Robichaud: The minister is aware that just recently the New Brunswick electric power commission decided to proceed with the construction of a thermal plant at Grand Lake, which will use at least 100,000 tons of coal a year. I think a good portion of the money that is now being spent on subsidies and grants would be spent much more profitably if it went to subsidizing the cost of electric power generated from coal in large generating plants at the pitheads. This would serve two purposes: it would absorb substantial quantities of coal and at the same time it would provide cheap power for new and existing industries in the Atlantic provinces.

Mr. Flynn: I would be pleased to ask the officials of the dominion coal board to consider the proposal of the hon. member. With regard to the gas turbine experiments—referring to the question asked by the hon. member for Kootenay West—I am told that a complete report was published about a year ago and is available for general use. The conclusion was that the suggestion was not practical. I could probably obtain a copy of this report for the hon. member.

Mr. Herridge: Thank you.

Mr. Winch: Mr. Chairman, I wish to ask one further question. I realize that we are not permitted to ask for information on what took place during an in camera meeting in connection with grid power. However, as we are discussing the matter of coal I would like to ask the minister whether because of his knowledge on a grid system he knows if any consideration is being given to this question. In the province of Saskatchewan—and I think I am safe in saying, in the province of Alberta also—there is enough lignite coal, if used for the production of power, to produce such a terrific horsepower that it could be tied into a grid system at approximately a rate of 2.7 to three mills for over 100 years. This is with

[Mr. Robichaud.]

the known resources of lignite coal in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Under this vote could I ask the minister whether that is in accordance with his knowledge, and whether it is being given any consideration in the matter of a power grid in Canada.

Mr. Flynn: Mr. Chairman, under this vote I do not think the hon. member should ask me this question, but I am willing to ask for a report as to whether it has been considered. I am not aware that it has been specifically considered by my department.

Mr. Winch: Then I understand, sir, that if there is any report on the utilization of the lignite coal of Alberta and Saskatchewan for the production of power, the minister will make it available; and if not, the minister will have a study made of it?

Mr. Flynn: Mr. Chairman, I did not say that I would have a study made of it. I said that if a study has been made, I will let the hon. member know what are the conclusions. However, I think the hon. member will agree with me that the difficulties in connection with coal in Canada are centred in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, mainly in Nova Scotia. I do not know of any specific problem in Saskatchewan. I would suggest that the use of coal in Saskatchewan would be a problem for the provincial government at this time. It may be that my department has examined the question which the hon. member has raised. If it has, I will be very pleased to let him know the conclusions that have been reached.

Mr. Winch: The estimates of the minister were referred to a few days ago and they could not be dealt with because he was attending the conference on the question of a national power grid. The question of coal is an important one. It covers this country from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, but it definitely ties in with coal of lignite nature in Saskatchewan and Alberta. My information is that millions of electrical horsepower are available by the utilization of lignite coal, for less than four mills.

Mr. Flynn: Mr. Chairman, I am not denying that the hon. member may be right. I would simply say that my understanding of the examination of the feasibility of a power grid was related to hydro resources. Perhaps in part this power could be provided by lignite coal, as suggested by the hon. member, but at the present time I am under the impression that the conference is considering the available hydro resources for the purposes of a national grid.

Mr. Winch: I am sorry. The minister has just said apparently, that the development of the grid power circuit is only to be based