

Columbia River Treaty

I can only say that the arguments used by the hon. gentleman were dealt with ad nauseam in the committee, and the hon. member knows it as well as any other hon. member who served on that committee.

Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): I would point out that if it is out of order for me to comment on the actions of other members of the house in this respect, it is equally out of order for the Secretary of State for External Affairs to put forward his explanation of their failure to take part in the debate. I quite agree with his use of the term "ad nauseam". It was precisely ad nauseam to hear the same assertions repeated and reiterated without the slightest jot or tittle of evidence to support them.

I have outlined the manner in which the government presented this subject to the committee, how every witness they brought before us is involved in the development of the treaty plan, every one. Not one of them could by any stretch of the imagination be called an independent technical witness. I must say I admired the words of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I always derive great pleasure and great entertainment from his skill in weaving a web of words to cover up or get round, shall we say, embarrassing facts; and I can only conclude by expressing the hope that the hon. gentleman will be able to baffle the external enemies of Canada with the same ease as he baffled and obfuscated the committee on external affairs in the matter of this treaty.

I am aware that there are a number of members of the committee who sincerely believe that this treaty is a good thing for Canada. My regret is this, that they were afforded only the advice of those who were already committed to this treaty plan. They were not given the opportunity they might have been given of studying the matter objectively and reaching their own conclusions. The statements of the Secretary of State for External Affairs made that quite plain.

I am convinced, sir, that within a very short time developments in British Columbia will prove beyond a doubt that this treaty has been a disastrous fiasco for Canada, and I for one do not propose to have my name connected with it in the slightest degree; but I also intend to make quite sure that those who support it will have their names connected with it for the future record.

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that this resolution might be approved by the house last night and it was for that reason that I hesitated to

take part in the debate last evening. Unfortunately the resolution was not approved, and certain statements have been made during the current discussion which make it imperative for me to make a brief intervention in the debate at this time.

When the resolution was before the house for referral to the committee I spoke on that occasion and put my position on the record. In reviewing the words I used at that time, I can say that the viewpoint I held then is the viewpoint I still hold following the long period of deliberation and discussion that took place in the committee on external affairs. I summed up my remarks on that occasion by saying I was sure that the more questions that were asked and the more information that was revealed in the standing committee, the more the decision of the former government that this was a basically sound and good program for Canada would be vindicated.

I repeat those words, Mr. Speaker, because I still believe this is the case. In fact my opinion has been reinforced as a result of the careful examination that took place in the committee. I want to repeat, too, because I think this is important for the discussion, that I do not feel this is the perfect treaty so far as Canada is concerned. No treaty reaches the absolute peak of perfection when it involves negotiation in three sensitive areas of jurisdiction, and I refer to the federal-provincial area as well as that perhaps even more difficult area of negotiation, the Canadian-United States area. But this is a breakthrough in international co-operation as well as in federal-provincial co-operation, and notwithstanding the slight imperfections so far as the ideal arrangement for Canada is concerned, I stand firm in the view that this is a basically sound treaty; and furthermore this is the only treaty—and this has been said many times—that could have been negotiated. In other words, it was the treaty that we are hoping parliament will approve, or it was no treaty at all.

Certainly this is a more positive approach than that which has been taken by the opponents of the treaty, which would mean that the Columbia river, an international river, one of the great river resources of this continent, would continue to meander on its way to the sea without any of the important economic benefits being obtained that are being made possible by the treaty under discussion.

The reason I speak at this time, Mr. Speaker, is that I think it is perhaps still