

Another imaginative project is the clearing of the Babine River slide in British Columbia. This tributary of the Skeena River was blocked by a slide of rocks and dirt not long ago, with the result that the salmon were unable to swim up it to their spawning grounds. The federal Government undertook to have the bed cleared again. At a cost of nearly a million dollars, the damage was repaired, and I am told that the number of salmon which went up last year was greater than ever before.

We have signed several international agreements for the conservation of ocean fisheries. Under one such agreement, the federal Government joined with many other governments whose fishermen share the fish harvest of the North Atlantic, in a Fisheries Convention to assure the permanence of the Grand Banks fish supply. On the Pacific another treaty between Canada, the United States and Japan makes provision against the intrusion of foreign fishing vessels in waters over which Canada exercises conservation measures.

I could go on, for in every department of the federal Government concerned with scientific research and national resources, conservation is the watchword. Consider, for example, the conservation aspect of the development of atomic energy. As you may have heard, studies are now being made of the economics of producing electrical power from atomic energy and in due course plants will be erected in Canada for this purpose. It is highly unlikely that atomic plants will replace hydro-electric plants but think of the contribution that will be made by atomic energy to ensuring a better geographical distribution of electric power. Although, as I have already said, it is true that only about one-quarter of our hydro-electric potential is now utilized, it is nevertheless now necessary to supplement hydro-power with steam plants in various parts of the country. In other words we cannot afford to be complacent about our sources of energy. We must conserve them and ever be on the alert to find new economic sources of power.

Conservation has two aspects. First there must be an accurate estimate of the national resources which are to be conserved. Second comes the task of ensuring that the renewable resources are not depleted at a faster rate than they can be replenished.

I need hardly tell you that conservation requires never ending effort. It will be a long time before we in Canada know with a sufficiently high degree of accuracy the extent of our renewable natural resources and what they are capable of producing. My guess is that we shall always be learning something new. As for ensuring that these renewable resources are not depleted at a faster rate than they can be replenished, in this we are only at the beginning.

Think of the progress within a generation in methods of cultivating the soil and of applying fertilizers, particularly in semi-arid areas. Think of the recent progress in control of disease in trees and in cultivated plants. Think of the vast engineering works undertaken in our lifetime to conserve and use water power.