

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

• (8:10 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**NORTHERN CANADA POWER COMMISSION ACT**

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING MEMBERS, FUNDS FOR
INVESTIGATION OF PROJECTS, ADVANCES FOR
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. MacEachen (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) that Bill C-193, to amend the Northern Canada Power Commission Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I have had an opportunity of reviewing carefully the remarks made by my colleague, the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), yesterday and this afternoon. It is not my intention to be repetitive or to take up the time of the House in reciting what has already been so ably put by that hon. member. However, I should like to take a few moments to point out to Your Honour and members of the House why a number of people who have no personal knowledge of or immediate association with the Yukon, as I certainly have not, object to the type of legislation that has been presented to the House.

The Canadian north includes the Yukon, of course, as well as the Arctic islands and the Northwest Territories. In recent years the north has been the subject of great interest to all Canadians. I think everyone in Canada is very interested in seeing how this huge area, potentially vastly wealthy in minerals, is to be developed. I think all of us, no matter which party we support, are interested in seeing those resources developed in the best and most efficient way for all Canadians, particularly for those who live and work in the area.

Judging from the remarks of the Parliamentary Secretary in presenting this legislation, and from the remarks of other hon. members, there seems no doubt that there has been very little consideration or analysis of the effects of contributions of private enterprise, as opposed to public or governmental enterprise, to the development of the north. Of course, many superficial remarks were made. As the hon. member for Yukon pointed out, the deputy minister made a number of superficial observations in this regard. Nevertheless, it is quite apparent that there has been no real analysis. We have had what one might call a guesstimate, if I might coin a phrase, as to which is the better of the two ways.

Some hon. members who may not have put their views on record—I do not think it is important whether or not their views are on record—have said that, the Northern Canada Power Commission must be effective because Ontario Hydro has been such a success over the years. I agree that Ontario Hydro has been a great success. It is a publicly-owned corporation, but it is just one publicly-owned corporation that has been a success. It is a non

Northern Canada Power Commission Act

sequitor to say that therefore every publicly-owned corporation will be a success. From the evidence—I call it evidence—presented by the hon. member for Yukon, it is clear that the Northern Canada Power Commission has not developed power very efficiently. It has been unfair with regard to rates charged to some users, and particularly unfair in proposing to equalize rates among the users of the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

The hon. member for Yukon pointed out that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) took a trip to Europe not long ago for the purpose of raising private capital for this and related projects in the north. That was a very commendable effort on the part of the minister. But the minister, despite his efforts in this regard, has apparently been snowed under by the establishment—by that I mean the establishment of senior mandarins in the civil service—many of whom have by hook or by crook penetrated to the front benches of the government party. This sort of thinking has permeated this government and the previous government led by former Prime Minister Pearson.

There is one point that I think is very important. Whether a private or a public enterprise operates utilities such as we are proposing in this bill, it is quite clear there must be some kind of review board to regulate the rates. I say this because public enterprises can become just as vicious, and more so in some cases, than private enterprises. One must consider the psychological effect on civil servants involved in these enterprises. Whenever members of the civil service or of the public service, or whatever one wants to call them, become associated with an enterprise, they invariably feel that they are infallible; they think their decisions are infallible; they become wasteful. Therefore, there must be some check on them.

All too often in the last few years have we seen the growth of boards, commissions, quasi-governmental corporations and organizations all over this country. Some have been federal, others provincial. Once they have been set up there has been no real control over them. In theory they must answer to Parliament, but this is a lot of nonsense. Your Honour knows that, just as the rest of us know it. Once these organizations are set up, they do as they please. The Public Service Commission is a good example, as is the CBC. I could present many other horrible examples of such organizations which, once set up, do as they please. Once they are established they are like Frankenstein's monster; there is no means of controlling them. For that reason, since the government has shown every inclination to establish bodies of this kind, there should be a board composed of members of the cabinet, or people who are elected, to review the rates decided upon by this or any related organization.

I have said on a number of occasions, and I repeat it, that this government and its immediate predecessor have adopted too paternalistic an attitude toward existing development in certain parts of Canada. I refer to the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and elsewhere. Its whole attitude has been, mother knows best or, if you want to put it another way, big daddy in Ottawa knows best.

Mr. Nielsen: The hon. member was right the first time.