

Supply—Northern Affairs

Mr. Fulton: I enter the discussion at this point for one purpose. That is to deal with the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition that this treaty was signed in haste, and to refute that suggestion completely. There was no haste in signing the treaty. The Leader of the Opposition has himself pointed out that the discussions dealing toward the ultimate co-operative development of the Columbia river began 17 years ago, and it is not my interpretation of the meaning of words that taking 17 years to conclude a treaty represents haste.

Certainly progress was very slow in some of the previous years. I could perhaps make some partisan comments on that point, but I shall not do so. I will say, however, that there was plenty of time taken in working out the details with regard to this treaty. It is not my intention to enter now into a discussion of the treaty itself because, first of all, these are not my estimates and, second, I agree that the proper place to do that is before the committee on external affairs when there will be the fullest discussion and the fullest vindication of the terms of this treaty, and the fullest explanation of the enormous advantages to Canada and to British Columbia which the treaty secures.

I am concerned at this time to discuss only this question of the situation surrounding the signature of the treaty, the circumstances concerning the negotiation of the treaty, and the care which was taken to ensure the knowledge and the co-operation and the consent of British Columbia, all of which makes it difficult indeed, to say the least, to explain the extraordinary position which the government of British Columbia is now adopting.

Just before one o'clock, or before the lunch hour intervenes, I should like to put this to the Leader of the Opposition. There was nothing improper or unusual in Canada signing this treaty even before complete and detailed arrangements had been made with British Columbia and before final agreement between Canada and British Columbia as to the things that our respective governments would do, because there was so much which depended on the form of the treaty itself—so many things which would have to be done the nature of which could not be ascertained until the treaty itself had taken shape and was in being. It was recognized on both sides that it would be perfectly appropriate to sign this treaty and leave those matters to be worked out, and to take care of this situation by the provision which was inserted in the treaty that the obligation arises only on the exchange of instruments of ratification.

That is the situation. That course was worked out because we both recognized that

[Mr. Pearson.]

we could not get all the details settled; the experts could not go to work on them; the necessary applications could not be made with respect to the location of dams and so on, until there had been a determination in the form of a treaty of what were to be the rights and obligations of both sides. So the treaty was worked out and was given formal expression by the signatures of the two countries, and the treaty itself provides for the situation which I have just described by saying that the obligation arises only after it has been finally approved by both countries and formal instruments of ratification have been exchanged. In the United States the approval of congress is necessary. Here the Prime Minister has said the approval of parliament would be asked for. So there was nothing imprudent or in the least improper or untoward in our signing this treaty, even though the detailed provisions which have to be worked out had not been worked out at that time because it is only the exchange of ratification which brings it into effect.

May I call it one o'clock?

At one o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 2.30 p.m.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Chairman, just before one o'clock I had dealt with the suggestion that it was somehow an unwise procedure for Canada to have signed a treaty with the United States in respect of the Columbia river development in advance of the final settlement of all details with British Columbia. I had explained that this suggestion is not well founded because there were many things that could only be settled after the form of the treaty itself was determined, although it is also true that these things which require to be settled include some things which it is essential to dispose of before the treaty becomes effective. They are such things as the physical location of dams, the issuing of licences authorizing the dams under the British Columbia water act, and details of the relationship between Canada and British Columbia.

Because these things could not be finally settled until the form of the treaty was agreed to, and because, before the treaty came into effect, it was essential to have them settled, the device I referred to was used. That is, the treaty itself contains a clause the effect of which is that the treaty does not become operative or effective, and no obligation arises thereunder, until there has been formal exchange of instruments of ratification.