



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

60/2

RESOURCES FOR TOMORROW

A Statement by Mr. Alvin Hamilton, Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, at the opening meeting of the Steering Committee for the National Conference on Conservation, on December 17, 1959.

May I first of all express a very warm welcome to the Ministers and officials who have come from all the provinces to this second meeting to consider plans and preparations for the National Conference on Conservation.

The first meeting, which was held just a little more than a year ago, decided that the conference that we have in contemplation should be limited to renewable resources - that is, the resources of soil, water, forests, wildlife, fish, and recreational facilities - all of these resources that are of great importance in the fabric of our national life. The Federal Government is, I can assure you, amply aware that the primary responsibility in many of these fields lies with the provinces - and that most of the resources to which I have referred, in so far as they are a matter of governmental property, are the property of the provinces. The Federal Government has not the least desire to extend its responsibilities or to interfere in any way with the jurisdiction that is properly that of the provinces. The Federal Government has, however, certain responsibilities of its own in these fields.

First, the Government of Canada has a direct interest in the whole nation's material welfare and well-being which results from the pace with which the ten provinces develop (or do not develop) their renewable natural resources. This is what is called the "national interest".

Secondly, the Government of Canada has the direct responsibility for the development of the resources of the Northern Territories which cover 40 per cent of Canada's land mass. In this role, my Government is the trustee of the provinces

which will eventually be established in those territories. The federal responsibility is identical with the provincial responsibilities within their legislative jurisdiction.

These, then, are the two "national" and "provincial" interests which will affect the Federal Government's attitudes in the course of the National Conservation Conference. My colleagues and I hope that a free and full exchange of views through the means of the proposed National Conservation Conference will benefit Canada in all its constituent parts and the several governments responsible for the nation's material well-being.

Apart from such responsibilities, it has, moreover, seemed to us that it is of the greatest possible importance that the great questions that relate to the use of these resources should be examined by all interested agencies - sitting down together and discussing them from the point of view of the nation as a whole. They are too important for us to run the risks of inadequate or possibly conflicting lines of action or to incur the possibility that we may, by failure to look at these questions together, leave gaps and omissions in our administrations that may injure the prospects of this great country - or may diminish the patrimony of the people who come after us.

It is for these reasons - because of our common interest and of our common responsibility both to Canadians of today and to Canadians of the future - that we who are representing the Federal Government here today are particularly glad to have the representatives of the provinces sitting with us again to discuss these questions.

Perhaps I should briefly review the background of the proposal that a National Conference on Conservation should be called.

We are all, I think, well aware of the way in which the population of the world and the population of this country are steadily increasing. Along with this growth of population we have at the same time a progressive effort to raise the living standards of many of the countries of the world that have not thus far enjoyed our own standards. Combined with this is a steady growth in industrialization and its concomitant demands for the sources of power and for resources of all types. These growths are the indication of the demands that there will be in future years for the resources that this country contains. The growth in our own population is the measure of the more immediate increase that there will be in pressure upon all the resources that are close at hand - particularly those in the renewable field. These are the pressures that we have to think about - and prepare for.

It is not many decades ago that the people of the United States thought of their resources as being illimitable and as being open to exploitation in any way that might suit best the needs of the moment and the production of a profit. It seemed inconceivable that there had to be any care in their application or use or that a situation could ever arise in which the resources would seem inadequate. We all know how that picture has changed. In some places even the air that people breathe is becoming a scarce resource as pollution of industries fouls it. For many cities the problem of water supply is exceedingly difficult and expensive - partly because the requirements of today were not foreseen in time, drainage basins were not protected, pollution was permitted, ground-water levels were allowed to fall, and many other problems were made inevitable because of inadequate planning and coordination. The Paley Commission recently reviewed the resource situation in the United States and in almost every field it pointed to the shortages that will affect that country in the years immediately ahead.

To some degree we in Canada stand today where the United States stood four or five decades ago. It is our responsibility to do whatever we can to ensure that these priceless resources are used wisely, are used to produce a perpetual wealth of benefits, and are used as an integrated whole to secure the optimum advantage for all the people of Canada.

It was in the light of the above considerations that the Prime Minister of Canada indicated on February 12, 1958, the decision of the Federal Government to consult with the provinces about the calling of a National Conference on Conservation. The Prime Minister was, of course, well aware of the measures that have been taken in the past - and that are being continued today - for discussion and co-operative work in particular resource fields. We have periodic meetings at governmental levels and also among non-governmental organizations in the fields of mining, forestry, fisheries, agriculture, and so forth. These are highly desirable and they have been most productive and helpful. We have not, however, since the turn of the century called together a group of the responsible governmental and other agencies to take a look at the complex of our resources as a whole. It is in this regard that it seemed to the Federal Government that there was scope for a new initiative that might be of great value to the country as a whole. We felt that the governments and other agencies by sitting down together could review the policies that have been followed and the work that has been done in order to see whether there are any shortcomings in it - whether there are gaps that should be filled - whether there are new lines of action that ought to be taken. There is value in assessing our present position, in looking at what the future will bring, and in considering how best we can meet the needs that we can foresee.

The first action by the Federal Government was to compile information on measures that are being taken under its authority in the resource field. This, as you know, was done early in 1958. On November 17th, 1958, the first meeting with representatives of the provincial governments took place. It was a source of great gratification to find that the provincial governments shared with us the view that a national conference on conservation could be of benefit and assistance.

As I have mentioned, that federal-provincial meeting reached the decision that the Conference should be limited to renewable resources including soil, water, forests, wildlife, fish and recreational facilities. It decided that the Conference should be called the "National Conference on Conservation - Multiple Use of Renewable Resources". I think these were wise decisions - although I must say that I have since wondered whether we could not, by a more striking and imaginative name, make clearer to the people of Canada the significance of the Conference. What will we be talking about? I suggest it is "Resources for To-morrow" - and perhaps we would do well to call our Conference by that name.

As to the limitation to renewable resources, it does not mean that we are neglecting the very important non-renewable resources, but simply that we feel that the renewable ones can be dealt with as a group in a productive and useful fashion. For the present, I feel sure that we shall have more than enough to do in considering the very wide range of questions that come together under the heading of renewable resources.

Since our meeting of last year, the provinces have submitted material concerning measures being taken by them in the resource fields that will be under discussion at the forthcoming Conference. The Federal Government has taken action by the appointment of a secretariat in order that the work of collating information and initiating the preparation of particular studies can be undertaken. I must confess that it has not been possible to proceed with the establishment of the secretariat or with the initial work as quickly as I had hoped. We do, however, now have the nucleus of what I think can be a strong and adequate organization and it was with that knowledge that it was felt that we could now call a meeting of the Steering Committee to consider the questions that were left to it at the meeting of last year. These were particularly the questions as to the type of paper that should be prepared to form the basis of the Conference and, secondly, what non-governmental organizations should be invited to participate in that Conference.

To my mind the studies that are undertaken for the Conference will be as important as the Conference itself. From these studies and resulting papers, I expect the Conference in its discussions will crystallize the ideas from all groups into suggestions for the eleven governments who have the policy-making power.

In these studies we should have an examination of measures now being taken with regard to research in the field of renewable resources generally. There ought to be a paper on population and resource demands, now and in the future; on technological changes and their implications for resource use. There should be a study of the adequacy of our inventories, particularly in the realm of forests and in relation to soil surveys and land mapping. We require an examination of the pressures of urban and industrial development upon the availability and use of land for agricultural purposes.

In the case of water, there are many very important questions to be examined. We know that pollution is already a very serious problem. What measures are needed to control it so as to ensure an adequate supply of pure water for all the human and industrial requirements of the future? We know that river-basin and drainage-basin planning has to be undertaken as an integrated whole. The flow of water pays no regard to municipal or provincial boundaries. We know also that water is a resource needed for many purposes: for communities, for industry, for agriculture, for power, for fish. How should we deal with it to ensure its maximum value for the multiple uses of which it is capable? We have not gone into these matters much in Canada so far.

Turning to forests, I have already mentioned the question of inventories. We are aware that there are many aspects of forest research that have not been fully examined. Genetics and research have as much application in our forests as in the growing of wheat. What is going to be needed to ensure that our forests will be permanently available to supply the growing demands of our lumber industry? Are we doing all that we should? I doubt it. Our forest industry is of great importance to many parts of this country. The valuable and renewable resource on which it is based demands close and careful study.

As a practical example of the type of thing that concerns me, I would like to tell you of the findings of a Working Group sponsored by FAO which met in Rome in September last dealing with paper and paper board. This committee was made up of top level authorities drawn from the pulp and paper industries of 16 countries.

With new revised techniques for estimating future world demand, it is now estimated that, compared to the world consumption of 56 million metric tons in 1955, by 1965, only six years away, world demand will be 88 million metric tons. By 1975, only sixteen years away, world demand is estimated at 134 million metric tons. If Canada is to hold approximately 18 per cent of the world market, we shall have to produce 17 or 18 million metric tons of paper and export pulp by 1965, as compared to our present production of less than 11 million metric tons. By 1975 we shall have to produce 27 to 28 million metric tons. Have we pulp forests in accessible commercial positions to meet this

tremendous increase? It may well be that, by bringing into production undeveloped areas in Canada, we can meet the first shock of this greatly rising demand. I think even a superficial examination of the matter will indicate that this will not be enough. The industry may find it necessary, in co-operation with the provinces, to go into more intensive forest management (including improved silviculture) of existing timber limits. Therefore, you can understand that, if this coming Conference helps us work out the solution to this very practical problem, then the provinces and the country as a whole will benefit tremendously. It is clearly a test problem of making the best use of our resources all across Canada.

Wildlife is, I think, one of our most neglected resources - perhaps because its economic value is not as obvious as that of some other resources. Wildlife has, however, a most important aesthetic and recreational role, particularly with the growing urbanization of our society. The growth of cities, industrial development and the increasing number of human species are the enemies of wildlife. What should be done to further its management and protection to ensure that it will be available in future decades? How does it fit into the recreational pattern that will be of growing importance? Must the encroachments of homo sapiens press the fauna of this country to the brink of extermination? Not necessarily, but it can happen if we do not watch out.

In the case of fish and fisheries I am sure that there are many matters that we ought to examine. In my own Department, I have become aware of the conflict between the demands of industrial development and the requirements of our valuable river fisheries. I think there ought to be a study of this problem, and of the relationship of industrial growth and fisheries generally, since they are certain to assume greater importance in future. What is the relationship between the growth of cities and factories, with their problems of water pollution and waste, and the maintenance of our inland fisheries? This whole field is one with which I am not particularly familiar, but I feel confident that there are many problems that could be examined with profit.

Turning to recreational facilities, where I do feel more competent to speak, I know that there are many serious questions that are going to arise in future years. Our growing population, more and more of it centered in cities, with increased leisure time, a higher standard of living, and more mobility over highways and through the air, is going to bring a tremendous pressure on recreational facilities throughout this country. There has to be planning in advance to meet this need. This is one field where it is almost impossible to go back and pick up the pieces after mistakes have been made. What is needed to develop further our urban, provincial and national parks? Are we ensuring that we will have enough open spaces for future needs? What are

we doing to prevent the possible alienation into private hands of lakes, shorelines and river frontages that will be required for the recreation and health of a population three or four times the size of our present one? We should be thinking of these problems. We have not done so to any great extent as yet. The time to remedy mistakes is before we make them!

I have not attempted anything like an exhaustive list. These are simply subjects that have occurred to me as quite clearly needing study. Everyone at this meeting will think of many more. Probably we cannot hope to have papers on every subject that is important but we should at least select the most significant ones; get competent people to undertake their examination; and have for our Conference a good basis of information as to where we stand, what we need, and what our future problems may be. We will probably want at the Conference itself papers or discussions on the most outstanding questions. Consideration of this programme is, I think, the most important thing to which this meeting must turn its attention.

I believe that all provincial governments are pursuing with great interest the job of developing their resources consistent with good conservation practices. It is for this reason that I want to tell you that we, in Ottawa, are excited about this Conference because it gives us a chance to think things out together, to develop some new and useful ideas and to take a good hard look at where we want to go. There is really no alternative available to us because the pace of development must be stepped up. It is no longer enough to maintain a level of production, high as it may be. Rather, a satisfactory rate of growth must be defined and achieved. On this basis, we can move forward together in maintaining a vigorous economy.

The Federal Government, apart from the administration of resources assigned directly to it, has a responsibility in being alert to possibilities for joint action with the provinces. In the past, there have been too many instances in which it was difficult to make such working partnerships effective. I am blaming no one for this but I think I see the main reason for this situation. Briefly, it is that neither provincial nor federal agencies have had an adequate plan or framework against which to judge any given line of action that has been proposed. We have not had the principles worked out so that we could say that this is good and that is bad. Yet we need such a framework of principles for the development of our resources and I believe we will get them from the Conference. It seems to me that this is a crucial requirement if we are to move forward as a nation at a satisfactory rate of development.

With this focus to our discussions, the problems of providing the necessary capital for development are set aside for later discussions. It is a separate issue to be dealt with in terms of what we decide needs to be done. In other words, the

framework and the principles must be formulated first. Let us then confine ourselves to formulating these principles so that intelligent and constructive action can be taken by governments at all levels when financing of projects comes up.

The question as to the participation of non-governmental agencies is also important. I am confident that many of them can make a direct contribution. Many of them too can carry out the work of education and information in a way that governments cannot do. They can make our people conscious of the need for wise management and sound planning if our "renewable resources" are in truth to be renewed for the full benefit of this country in years to come.

I do not intend to go into more detail about plans or suggestions for the Conference. These can emerge in the course of our discussion of the various items on the agenda. I would simply conclude by saying that the more I have examined this matter the more I am convinced that there is a great national advantage to be served by a well-prepared and carefully thought out Conference to lead to a better understanding of the problems of our renewable resources. It is our task today to ensure that the Canada of the future has available to it, throughout the whole renewable field, the "Resources of Tomorrow" that it is going to need if the greatness and wealth of our nation is to be maintained.

S/A