

Newfoundland

part of which was in Canada and part in another country, namely, Newfoundland. I am wondering whether the action we are taking today, without some kind of assurance or saving clause, does not give to the company—provided they exercise the right within the five-year period set out in section 19 of the act to which I have referred—the right to go in and exploit for private gain the iron ore resources and other great natural wealth to be found there.

That wealth can mean great things for the people of Newfoundland, if properly developed in the interests of the people. It can mean great things for the people of Canada as a whole. I should hope that when we reach the committee stage on the bill and are dealing with the section concerning natural resources, the ministers piloting the various sections through the committee might be in a position to give us at least their opinions as to what the situation would be with respect to the act to which I have referred. As hon. members are aware, we are vitally concerned that the great natural resource be developed for the good of the people of Canada as a whole, including the people of Newfoundland, and not for the advantage of private interests.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the house to adopt the motion?

Some hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. St. Laurent moves that I do now leave the chair and that the house resolve into committee of the whole on said bill.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, I thought the Prime Minister intended to speak on the second reading.

Mr. St. Laurent: I had intended to say something about the points that have been raised, but I did not insist because I thought I could make those remarks as soon as the house got into committee. Then if what I said suggested further questions, those questions could be answered during the committee stage. While Mr. Speaker is in the chair I could say what I intended to say but I do not think that that would be of any particular advantage to hon. members.

Mr. Drew: I do not want in any way to seek a change in the ordinary rules of the house. The reason I did not speak on second reading was that I thought the Prime Minister had indicated that he was going to speak. There are certain observations that I should like to make on the second reading, and in view of that I should like to have your consent, Mr. Speaker, to proceed.

Mr. St. Laurent: That will be quite agreeable to us. After I had moved the second

reading, if I spoke I would close the debate. I thought that if I were going to close the debate it would be just as convenient to have my intended remarks made in committee, where there would be an opportunity to ask further questions as might be suggested. I think it is the desire of all hon. members of the house that no one be deprived of his right to speak on the second reading. If the leader of the opposition wishes to do so I think we could consider the motion as not yet carried and allow him that opportunity.

Mr. Knowles: Is this a precedent that might be quoted on future occasions?

Mr. St. Laurent: If on a future occasion the circumstances are such as they are today, I hope it would be the temper of the house to make the same disposition as I suggest should be made today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Has the leader of the opposition unanimous consent to speak at this time?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make certain remarks on second reading of this bill and explain my position in regard to the agreement which accompanies it.

First of all, I should like to refer to the remarks that I made yesterday when the motion was before the house, and express the hope that the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) will have something to say on those points before the house goes into committee. I believe that they raise important considerations which should be borne in mind by hon. members when dealing with this extremely important bill.

The bill itself is simple and brief. It merely has the effect of approving the terms of the draft agreement which was settled by the representatives of the Canadian government and by those who had been appointed to represent Newfoundland in those discussions. In effect, the considerations before hon. members on second reading of this bill are very similar to those which were before them yesterday when they were dealing with the motion.

The question before hon. members is really whether or not they wish to proceed with the arrangements which have been made to bring Newfoundland into confederation.

I think it should be pointed out and remembered during the discussions that in a case of this kind there is not the latitude to suggest amendments which can be exercised ordinarily when a bill is in committee. Usually, when a bill is in committee, any changes that are made by way of amendment or deletion affect the legislative authority of this house