

Northwest Territories Act

first time, the elected members of the territorial council a majority, as compared with those who are appointed.

Formerly we appointed five members, and we shall continue to appoint five from outside, under the amended act—

Mr. Nielsen: Will the minister permit a question?

Mr. Laing: Yes.

Mr. Nielsen: Will the minister explain to hon. members why the government feels it necessary to appoint any members, rather than having them all elected?

Mr. Laing: Yes, I should be very happy to explain. This is a personal opinion. The more we can attract the attention of southern Canadians to the resources and the possibilities of the Northwest Territories, the better for all of us, and indeed, the better for the territories especially. Over the years we have appointed individuals knowledgeable about the north. Some of them were old hands from the north, and some of them had been engaged in defence, as my hon. friend knows.

They were appointed to be the representatives of southern Canada and, indeed, to give their knowledge of northern Canada to southern Canadians. I think that if we continue to make appointments of commissioners or councillors from southern Canada of the calibre that we have in the past, it would be all to the good of Canadians living in southern Canada, and to the good of the residents of the territories.

We have thought that those who toil are entitled to adequate remuneration. The members of the council have been drawing \$2,000 per year. We think that opportunities to serve on council should now be given to every resident in the north competent to serve. We are therefore bringing in this amendment, increasing the emolument to \$5,000 per year for elected members, of which \$1,000 shall not be considered for taxing purposes. In addition to that, there are a number of other amendments where greater power is given to the commission and to the council, by the setting up of a territorial fund. I think hon. members of the house will realize that the territorial fund of the Northwest Territories is part of the consolidated revenue fund of Canada. In the setting up of the fund, greater power is given to council to govern there.

Apart from total enfranchisement these are not greatly significant amendments, Mr. Speaker, but they are amendments which we

[Mr. Laing.]

feel at this time, when we are so imminently to receive a report as to what should be the government of the Northwest Territories, we are forced to make. They are the minimum amendments that I would make. To go beyond what we are suggesting in these amendments, or to prejudge the report we expect in August, or to anticipate it in any way, would be very wrong indeed, and would be an affront to the commission of inquiry we set up.

I want to remind the house now, that with respect to the territories of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories—and I speak predominantly of the Northwest Territories—today the taxpayer of southern Canada is sending in about \$74 million per year. We are taking out of these two territories a total of \$14 million per year.

These territories are deficit areas today. We are just at the point now where we are seeing the possibilities of enormous wealth being exploited there. Mr. Speaker, when you scrape off 20 feet or 30 feet of overburden and take out ore worth \$150 a ton, you have a very rich mine. There are a great number of properties that are becoming apparent, which have considerable wealth, and which are sufficiently high in value to justify the admittedly higher costs of transportation and of living in the area.

We are concerned to day with the people who live there. We are putting in a splendid educational system. Eighty five per cent of the children attend school and they attend school 80 to 85 per cent of the time, which is very good for that climate.

I want to remind the house again that the preponderant indigenous population is not generically inferior to any other people in any way. When their young children go to school and they are afforded opportunities equal to those elsewhere, they are every bit as good as anybody else. An increasing number of the indigenous peoples are working in mines, running the railways and performing a variety of tasks which need to be performed, and which were performed previously by white people. As quickly as possible we must raise the numbers of indigenous employees in the territories. That is the only way in which we can construct an economy for those people.

Anyone who says that we must not invest in these people is helping to perpetuate a condition where we should forever have to send in money to sustain the territories. This is a suggestion which is intolerable to the