

*Yukon and Territorial Lands Acts*

debate I want, first of all, to congratulate both the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner). Like the hon. member for the Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange), I am also pleased to see the apparent increased activity of the Minister of Justice in the two territories. I agree generally with the principle of the bill, but as a member of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development, I will have something more to say as we examine the bill in more detail.

The bill generally is a move to give the governments of the two territories a little more authority and autonomy. I welcome this. Perhaps the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development did not go as far as some would have liked, but he certainly did take very positive steps in the right direction. I was particularly pleased to see the increase in the number of elected representatives in the Northwest Territories Council from seven to ten, and a decrease in the number of appointed members from five to four. I hope that it will not be too long before we see all of the members elected to this council.

When talking about the appointed members, I do not want to create the impression that these fellows did not do a good job. The contrary, I think, is true. The appointed people from various walks of life in southern Canada have contributed a great deal to the governing and general development of the Northwest Territories. I could mention a number of people who have made contributions, but I would like to limit my remarks today particularly to the contributions of the native peoples.

Abe Okpik, the first Eskimo appointed to the Northwest Territories Council, I think made an outstanding contribution on behalf of the Eskimo people. He brought to the Northwest Territories Council an insight into the language, culture and problems of the Eskimo people that had never been enunciated before in that council. This was a great thing. I believe that his work was really the forerunner to the election of Mr. Simone Michael, the first Eskimo elected to the council. As we have read and heard, Simone is making his mark. I think perhaps his mark is even greater because he was elected. He was elected by the people of the eastern Arctic.

Another gentleman I would like to mention briefly is John Tetlich Charlie from Fort MacPherson, the first Indian appointed to the territorial council. Like Mr. Okpik, I believe

Mr. Charlie also made great contributions to the government of the territories. He brought the insight of the Indian people, their culture and language into the contributions that the native people have made to life in the Northwest Territories. However, Mr. Speaker, I hope that after the next election we will see the first Indian elected to the territorial council. There has been a lot of good political talk going on amongst the Indian people of the territories, and if this means action, as I know most of the Indian talk does, I am confident that we will see at least one Indian elected to the next territorial council.

● (4:30 p.m.)

I agree with some of the remarks which were made by the House leader of the Official Opposition. I recognize that this does not come within the ambit of the present bill but I should like to appeal to the Minister of Indian Affairs, the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to take action to deal with the question of aboriginal claims by Indians and Eskimos. In this context, I would suggest that the terms of reference of the Commissioner who has been appointed to look into the various Indian claims should be broadened so as to enable him to make observations and recommendations pertinent not only to the northern territories but to the west of Canada as well, particularly to my province of British Columbia.

The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) made reference, also, to a number of statistics which are reported in *Hansard* at page 6944. He quoted some statistics with reference to the death rate and the life expectancy of native peoples. It is too bad the hon. member used figures dating back to 1966, because great strides have been made in recent years under the Department of Indian Affairs and the Department of National Health and Welfare.

To put the matter in a different perspective, I should like to quote some statistics from 1968 respecting Indian life expectancy—these figures relate to the whole of Canada which, of course, includes the Northwest Territories. Life expectancy for Indian men in 1968 was 61.31 years, whereas life expectancy for non-Indian men was 69.04 years. The life expectancy of Indian females was 65.86 years and the life expectancy of non-Indian females was 75.60 years. I know we still cannot be very happy about these statistics but they do show that a good deal of work has been done.