

time taken up with the introduction of this bill in the House is a waste.

When we get the Liberals and the Conservatives together on a measure to provide for the residents of the Northwest and Yukon Territories, a measure they consider to be some kind of a plum, it arouses some suspicion in my mind. Had the two parties got together and suggested the appointment of an ombudsman, or someone of that nature, who could do something for the people of the Northwest and Yukon Territories, I can assure the House they would have received a great deal of support. I see no merit whatever in this idea on which the Liberals and the Conservatives are in agreement. This is a waste of money, and the people of the north have not asked for and do not want anything like this. I do not think any self-respecting northerner would accept such a measure.

Should this bill be approved by this House, and that seems very likely since the Liberals and Conservatives are together on it, it will discriminate to a large extent against the native population of these territories. If hon. members will look at Section 23(4) of the British North America Act they will find that, among the qualifications required to become a senator, a candidate must personally have real property over and above his debts to a value of \$4,000. I should like anyone to travel throughout the Northwest and Yukon Territories and point out to me a number of native people who are in that position. I am sure they will find the number to be very small. Just yesterday—

Mr. Chrétien: You have it.

Mr. Firth: Do you want to be one of the representatives of the north?

● (1250)

Just yesterday before the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development some figures were read out to us by the representatives from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. They referred to the income of the people in the Northwest Territories. That is on the record and shows that the income level for the majority of the northern native people is under \$1,000. The accepted poverty level for the country, I believe, is somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$3,500. I suggest this discriminates to a large extent against the northern native people.

I should like to reiterate the point that I would rather see this thing scrapped and sent to the junk yard. We would prefer having an ombudsman representing both territories. This could be accomplished with one third the cost of having a senator from each territory who would not be representative. In addition this would amount to the appointment of either a Liberal or Conservative hack, who perhaps would be a campaign manager in forthcoming election campaigns. At the present time I think the Liberals are indicating some kind of desperation over the fact that they do not have representation from either territory, and therefore they intend to take some more of the taxpayer's money which will be wasted in an effort to obtain some representation from that part of the country. I made a slip—that would not be representation at all, Mr. Speaker.

Senate Representation

I hope that this bill does not pass but, if it should pass and should be referred to the committee, I hope that we will have in attendance there representatives from the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory, and from their councils, because I am sure they will say what the people from that part of the country believe about this matter. I am almost certain they will echo the sentiments I have expressed at this time. I shall waste no more time on this matter.

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, while I always respect the remarks and the feelings expressed by the hon. member for the Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth), I should say I am a little disappointed this morning to hear him accuse the Liberals and Conservatives of getting together in a sort of conspiracy to deal with this bill. Hon. members should be aware that we in this party have never gone to bed with the government. I look back on the twenty-ninth parliament and recall vividly the actions of the party to my left in dealing with the government of that day. I can assure the hon. member that there is no conspiracy at this time on our part to co-operate with the government. We do feel, however, that this bill is necessary and should be passed.

I have no intention of making a lengthy speech on the subject this morning, but I do recall that a week or ten days ago we were dealing with amendments to the Northern Canada Power Corporation Bill. While that bill was in committee we heard from various groups and representatives of the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories. They made representations and suggestions concerning how that particular bill should be dealt with, and nearly without exception the members of those various groups and organizations indicated they were looking forward to the day when both the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories would attain provincial status. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Buchanan) and the staff of that department taking part in the committee hearings indicated it was their feeling that we should work toward the day when both these territories would attain provincial status.

I feel this particular bill is one more step toward giving both territories provincial status. It moves us one step closer toward attaining that status, which I believe is what the people of the territories and all members of this House want. Over the years there has been much criticism of the other place. Much of that criticism has been deserved. Over the years appointments to the other place has become a means of paying the political debts of the party in power to those people on the hustings who worked on its behalf.

That was not the intention of the Fathers of Confederation when they set up our constitution and provided for the Senate. They felt there was a need and a place for a Senate in the government of our country, and that the Senate would serve a useful function. The Senate should be made up of a balance of representatives from the various political parties. This is not the situation at the present time.

Before I came down to the House I looked at the parliamentary guide, and noted that recent figures show that the representation in the Senate is made up of 85 per cent of appointees by the government and some 15 per cent of