

Yukon and Territorial Lands Acts

that what I have suggested will be done, because if they are not done I gravely fear for the future of the northern part of our continent.

Mr. R. J. Orange (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, keeping an eye on the clock I should like to say a few words this evening and, hopefully, later about this most important piece of legislation affecting northern Canada.

• (5:40 p.m.)

We welcome this bill, Mr. Speaker. We welcome the fact that the government has moved according to schedule in bringing these most important amendments relating to the future of the councils of the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories prior to the forthcoming elections which are to be held later this year in both territories. We see that the amendments will provide, in the case of the Northwest Territories, an increased council and a reduction in the number of appointed members. They will give a number of powers to the council which the council has not had up to this point.

I wish to congratulate the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner). I welcome his participation in the movement of more responsibility into northern Canada. We welcome his initiatives which started a year ago last April, as he said earlier, in bringing the administration of justice and all its related functions closer to the people in the north. The fact that justices of the peace will now be appointed by the commissioner in consultation with his officials, and no longer by recommendation, is most welcome. It was tedious and laborious to come all the way to Ottawa to have their appointments dealt with by the cabinet. In consequence, delays of many months were caused in the appointment of these junior judicial officials in the territories. I think these initiatives will be welcomed in the north.

The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) has introduced a number of amendments to the Territorial Lands Act. I believe that this initiative is long overdue. However, in view of the great surge of economic and resource development throughout northern Canada in this day and age, I believe that the kind of ideas the minister has to protect the sensitive environment of the north to ensure that the ecology of northern Canada is not affected by resource development is something that will

[Mr. Baldwin.]

be welcomed by conservationists throughout Canada, Canadians generally and northern people particularly.

Too long in the past we have watched man's effect on the environment as he has searched for the riches of the earth. We have seen trails across the tundra, the damming of creeks and the change of the environment, ecology and geography. We have wondered when man would be intelligent or smart enough to take some strong action to ensure that these sensitive areas of our country are protected for eternity. The minister has not as yet indicated what the regulations will be. However, if we read the proposed amendments in this bill we will see that the regulations should do the kind of job that all of us expect. I hope there will be the kind of land management, if I may use that term, that will protect, quoting from the bill—

—the ecological balance or physical characteristics of any area, set apart and appropriate any territorial lands in that area as a land management zone.

In fairness to the mineral resource companies which have wandered through the north for the past 100 years, I suggest that they have protected the environment to the best of their ability within the regulations set down by the government. I hope that when the minister is discussing some of these aspects before the committee he will take a look at the staking and other regulations which of necessity at the moment require a disturbance of the physical characteristics of the area where work is being done.

The proposed amendments affecting the councils of the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories have gone reasonably far. However, as I have said before in this House and in other places, I am concerned about two particular aspects. I congratulate the minister on increasing the number of elected members on the Northwest Territories Council from two to three. In November the minister said there would be two, and in May he said there would be three. On third reading I hope the minister will agree with the amendment which will be proposed to increase to four the number of elected members.

I hope that in the process of our discussions in committee we will come to some agreement and find a way around this dilemma of the Ottawa establishment being concerned about giving too much responsibility to the councils, and the dilemma of the councils being too concerned about wanting to be more involved