

Mr. Lewis: Just wait and see. The hon. member's apology is so qualified that he never ceases to astound me by his generosity, as he did again today. If he is unaware of the source of his statement earlier, I have no difficulty with it. I have known the hon. gentleman to have been a very imaginative fiction writer on other occasions.

Mr. Chrétien: I rise on the same question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. If I were to rise each time I felt that the hon. member is inaccurate, I would be on my feet all the time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If generosity is to be attributed to anyone it should be attributed to the Chair. I now recognize the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow).

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth) already indicated, it is our intention to vote in support of this bill. Having said that, I want to say to the minister that we do not consider this bill to be nearly as important as he does. I look on it as being no more than minor cosmetic surgery. It will make the situation north of the 60th parallel look a little better but it will not really change the very difficult and serious situation which exists up there. What is the situation?

I do not intend to deal in any detail with the social and economic problems of the northern half of this country today, but the situation is a depressing one. Of the 35,000 people who live in the NWT more than half are of Indian, Eskimo and Metis origin. Studies done in the Mackenzie district recently show that the per capita family income of the white people living in the NWT is almost \$10,000 a year, while the per capita income of the Eskimos is less than half of that and of the Indians is not much more than a quarter of that. That is the situation to which we must address ourselves.

● (1640)

One of the ways in which it can be changed is to give the people of the Northwest Territories and of the Yukon more authority in decision making than they have had up until now, and even more than they will have after we pass this bill which the minister commands to us today. I can only assume from the actions of the minister, of his office, and of the Commissioners that not only do they not believe in provincial status for the two territories—incidentally I myself do not believe that the time for that kind of status has arrived yet—but they really do not believe in democracy or responsible government at all. Let me begin with the minister's office.

I am sure there has been a great deal of discussion in the cabinet, and between the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien), the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Jamieson), and the Commissioners of the Yukon and of the Northwest Territories about whether the benefits of DREE programs should be made available to the two territories. I am sure I can make the statement without being contradicted that the minister must have received representations from both Commissioners urging that their territories be included in those areas which can avail themselves of DREE grants. If the Commissioners did not make that kind of proposal, then I submit they would be derelict in the discharge of their duties.

Yukon and Northwest Territories

I point out that in the Whitehorse Star of March 1 there was a report of an announcement by the special assistant to the minister that Department of Regional Economic Expansion funds will soon be available in the Yukon. I am sure the special assistant has some faults, just as we all have, but I doubt that he would lie so brazenly, and therefore he must have been telling the truth. I suggest to the minister that if he believes in the rights of northerners, and in the administrations that he has set up to give them some input into what goes on in their areas, it would not be his special assistant, speaking at a political meeting, who would make that kind of announcement.

That kind of carry-on is a downgrading of the member of parliament for the Yukon, of the member of parliament for the Northwest Territories, and of the Commissioners and councils of both those areas. If the minister does not see that, then he does not have the slightest idea about participatory democracy. My colleague from Assiniboia calls it 19th century politics. It is Tammany Hall politics of the worst kind. Mr. Speaker, I did not think that in Canada in 1974 we would see that, under a supposedly progressive minister such as the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The minister tells us that this bill will increase the number of elected councillors in both territories, and will eliminate the hitherto appointed councillors in the Northwest Territories. That is a step in the right direction, but he went on to imply that elected members of both councils would have more authority to direct the expenditures and the operations of the territorial governments. Where is that spelled out in the bill? Where is the legislative authority for that kind of statement?

As I understand the present situation, what happens is that the individual commissioner brings down a budget. I presume he has discussed it with the minister. I say I presume, because I really wonder if the minister has approved everything that the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories does. Not today, but some time when we are dealing with expenditures for the Northwest Territories, I would like to ascertain—and I am sure I am not the only one—the arrangements under which the Commissioner operates what my colleague from the Northwest Territories calls "Airforce I". Does that aircraft belong to the government of Canada, or is it leased? Is there an amount in the estimates for the rental of the plane, if it is rented? Is there a limit on what the Commissioner can spend? Does anybody but the Commissioner decide when, where, and how often he will fly?

Did the minister ever approve the large amount of money which is spent each year on the Commissioner's Ball, a very lavish affair? It may not be very much money in terms of the total expenditures of the Northwest Territories, but I think it would be sufficient to build a dozen or more homes for native people who now live under pretty awful conditions.

What about the executive suites in Yellowknife and Frobisher Bay, which I have not seen but which I have heard about from many sources? How much do they cost a year? Who authorized the rents for them? How often are they occupied, and by whom? These are the kinds of questions which any responsible government representative should be asked, and yet these are questions that are