

Yukon Act

A decision on the amendment will be given later after consideration.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I apologize for moving back and forth in the chamber but I was anticipating, as a result of a call from the minister, that the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange) would try to catch Your Honour's eye. I do not intend to speak at any great length on the bill before us. First of all, I should like to say that I entirely support the contentions of the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) in this regard, notwithstanding the fact the hon. member and I may have some differences of opinion regarding a certain Klondike festival. As a member from the city of Edmonton and the province of Alberta, I understand the particular problem which the hon. member for Yukon has been underlining with great eloquence in respect of the administration of the Yukon and the aspirations of the people there regarding their right to administer their own affairs.

Without repeating what the hon. member has said, I believe there are a number of points that we should certainly consider. I do not intend to be personally offensive to the minister or any of the people charged with the administration of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, but—perhaps the minister will correct me if I am wrong—I believe I was in the area of the Northwest Territories long before the minister and perhaps even before the hon. member for Northwest Territories was there. Even in those pre-war years there was the feeling that Ottawa was so far away, so paternal, that if there was a wrong way to do a thing Ottawa would find it.

An hon. Member: Why was there that feeling?

Mr. Lambert: I do not know. I am not being offensive to anyone, but that was the attitude at that time. I have since discovered that the same attitude exists among the people of the Northwest Territories who come down to Edmonton, as they do, and I have certainly found this attitude among the people of the Yukon when I have been up there. It has also been conveyed to me when people from the Yukon have visited Edmonton.

The people in these territories are not at all happy with long-range administration. We in Alberta are particularly conscious of this when it comes to the question of national parks. I will not say any more on that

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret).]

subject. The minister knows that I and the majority of the people of Alberta differ with him and his officials with regard to parks policy. This is because of the long-range paternalism of this government which, frankly, may seem to be nice and tidy for those in the inner core but for those on the fringe who are the subject matter of the decisions it is both irksome and reprehensible.

As the hon. member for Yukon indicated, this is not a cry for autonomy. This is a reasoned approach. Surely to goodness there is a great case in this day and age for as much freedom of action as it is possible to give. It is not like the old days when the only contact with the Yukon was through going by rail to Vancouver, then by boat up to Skagway and in from there. There was no immediate contact in those days. Now one can reach these territories as quickly as a fast airplane can get there. Communication by electronic means is even quicker. There are a number of things as to the details of this bill that I personally wish to question, but I would reiterate the plea of the hon. member for Yukon that this matter should be referred to the committee.

If this were done, appropriate representations could be made and in particular the members of the council and people they represent could be heard in regard to this measure. Some people may say: We will put these amendments in and see how they work; then we may deign to amend the law. In reply to such a suggestion I would say that the minister has opened up the act at this time. He has introduced a number of amendments that have been standing by for a long time merely because it was not desirable to open up the act. I know enough about administration in this regard to realize that there is always reluctance to open up any act and there must be a most compelling reason before this is done. Therefore, let us not say we will open up the act again in the very near future to take care of anything which may have been missed or something that is not working in this connection. That would be merely living in a fool's paradise. Let us put this question before the committee, in order that they may hear representations. If this is the desire of the council and people of the Yukon, what on earth is the great hurry in pushing this bill through without it being considered by the committee? With those words, Mr. Speaker, I support the spirit of the amendment.