

Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Bill

I should like to hear the Secretary of State for External Affairs speak up in asserting Canadian sovereignty in the North, and I would urge upon him to convince the Prime Minister to do the same thing. After all, the work of one of Canada's finest sons from the province of Quebec was largely responsible for securing a great deal of our Arctic land and waters. Are we now to listen to, much less tolerate, another famous sons of Quebec in the form of a Prime Minister say we are not asserting this valuable work of Joseph Bernier? It would appear so.

We have heard the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) go through a list of the ways in which Canada is asserting her sovereignty in the Arctic. He says it is not necessary to legislate sovereignty. He says we have asserted sovereignty as a result of the establishment of weather stations. I ask him to look at the composition of those weather stations; they are not all Canadian. He says we establish our sovereignty in the Arctic by the establishment of military stations and detachments. I ask him, where are these?

The Minister of National Defence (Mr. Cadieux) has released an announcement to the press that he intends to take this gigantic step of establishing military bases in the north, and will patrol some 1,750,000 square miles of Canada with 50 soldiers. This action has been taken after they destroyed the military installations at Whitehorse which comprised 250 air force personnel and a similar number of army personnel. I understand there is now a re-awakening of interest in the north and the Minister is putting in 50 soldiers.

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, if I may be allowed to correct the hon. member, there are now 400 men permanently stationed in the north. What we are planning to do is increase this activity. For instance, I am announcing an early exercise by the air arm regiment with a strength of a thousand. You are talking about 35 people but I am talking about the headquarters.

Mr. Nielsen: We are going to have a headquarters staff of 50 people. As far as military exercises are concerned, we have had these over the years—exercise Beaver and goodness knows how many more in the north. What is the minister of defence asking the people of Canada to believe? This is obviously an effort to gain publicity at a time when the Prime Minister has raised grave doubts about the sovereignty of Canada over her northern

[Mr. Nielsen.]

regions. We are rushing forth with our fists in our pockets and saying we are establishing sovereignty now. We are going to send another 50 soldiers into the north. It is a simple exercise of mathematics, to divide 450 soldiers into 1,750,000 square miles to discover how effective that sort of assertion is going to be in connection with Canada's sovereignty in the north.

Much more has been accomplished since the days of Bernier when he assisted in setting up the first mounted police post on Ellesmere island. He was responsible largely for setting up subsequent mounted police posts. The same situation applies to our establishments in connection with the activities of our geologists, health facilities and our weather facilities in the north. Basically, the people of Canada believe that the sending of 50 soldiers to Yellowknife to set up a headquarters to manage 400 men, which in itself is—

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): You are distorting the facts.

Mr. Nielsen: If I am distorting them, I do not want to.

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): You know that.

Mr. Nielsen: I do not know that I am distorting the facts at all. The minister has said there are 400 soldiers in northern Canada. That is not distorting the facts.

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): No, you said there were only 50.

• (2:20 p.m.)

Mr. Nielsen: Yes, 50 of them are making up the headquarters staff. I am using the minister's own explanation. The setting up of a headquarters in Yellowknife comprising 50 soldiers to manage 400 men is questionable management, but no one can ask the Canadian public to believe that this is somehow re-asserting sovereignty over Canada's Arctic regions. The fact remains that our Arctic extends from the 60th degree of longitude to the 141st and up to the North Pole. The fact remains that that was the position adopted by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, by Sir Robert Borden, by Mr. Meighen, by Mackenzie King, and by the former Conservative Prime Minister, Mr. Diefenbaker. Yet, all of a sudden it is negated by this Prime Minister when he says we are not asserting our sovereignty over the Canadian Arctic.

Mr. Sharp: In this legislation.

Mr. Nielsen: All right, I will go along with the Secretary of State for External Affairs,