

Yukon and Territorial Lands Acts

elected member of the Northwest Territories Council, said in January there were six Eskimo people working for this company in which Canadians have invested \$23 million or \$26 million. Somewhere in the back of my mind I recall setting information, subsequent to that statement by Mr. Pryde, that there were two Eskimo or Indian people working for Panarctic Oil. Surely, when we remember that 40 per cent of the population is native to this area, we can do better than that when it comes to a question of public policy.

We know what the statistical information is. Statistics do not always reflect what people are. But we know, for instance, that the native population of the area, comprising some 40 per cent of the total population, is at the absolute bottom level when it comes to income. The average income is \$400 or \$500 a year, something of that sort. We also know, again statistically, that the non-native population working in the area receive incomes which are much higher than the national average of non-native people in the rest of Canada. So the disparity is even greater than might first appear to be the case. The minister makes a passing comment to indicate his concern about these matters.

To indicate that these are not simply views of mine hauled out of the air for the purpose of making a declamatory statement which might appeal to somebody, perhaps I might read a statement contained in an article in the Toronto *Daily Star* of January 15 attributed to a gentleman named Simonie who lives on Baffin Island and is an elected member of the Northwest Territories Council. I had better read it all. This is a Canadian Press story from Yellowknife:

Oil exploration in the Arctic should be halted or at least slowed down, an Eskimo member of the Northwest Territories Council said yesterday.

Simonie of Baffin Island, elected member for the eastern Arctic, said the possibility of oil discoveries threatens the existence of the Eskimo and the wildlife upon which their survival depends.

Eskimos, he said, are concerned about tankers taking oil from the Arctic. A tanker cracked by a collision with ice could release a slick that would kill wildlife for miles around.

"I know starvation is coming. But we're not ready for this yet. They don't care about animals. All they think about is taking oil from the ground."

Simonie said southern Canadians viewed the voyage of the S.S. *Manhattan* through the Northwest Passage last fall as a great achievement, but to the Eskimo "that ship is no good."

He called for restraint in exploration until less hazardous ways of moving oil south are found.

While he related his observations to the *Manhattan* and the oil, he was really talking

[Mr. Howard (Skeena).]

in a much larger context; he was expressing the concern which the Eskimos felt for their very livelihood. The minister in his earlier statement and again in his statement today said he believes he can develop some rules, some procedures which will be acceptable both to the exploiters and to the people living in the area, some regulations which will be compatible with the concept of profit-oriented oil or mineral groups and the maintenance of an ecological balance, some system within which industrial development and environmental control will be compatible. He further stated that if such rules and regulations were not acceptable to all concerned, the government would not hesitate to assume its responsibility. This sounds fine, but I wonder why the minister did not go further and tell us what he conceived his responsibility to be. Is it a responsibility oriented toward industrial development? Is it a responsibility oriented toward finding and extracting oil and minerals? Or is it a responsibility which is oriented toward the people, toward preservation, toward conservation?

I think it is significant that the minister stopped short when he made his declaration. His silence indicates to me that his concern in the field of environmental control is not very strong, though it should be because he above all, by virtue of his position in the cabinet, is the person charged with responsibility for protecting the rights, the freedom and the ethical position of the people in this region. So far the minister has indicated that his concern for these rights is extremely shallow. This is illustrated by the position he has taken in relation to the political structure in the territories. If that is an indication of his true concern—and it also shows up in his approach to the environmental question—then I very much fear for the north.

• (4:50 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, as the bill before the House has just been tabled, I admit having studied it only very summarily while listening to the members who preceded me.

On the other hand, I must also confess that I rely on the good faith of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) who, to my mind, is making praiseworthy efforts towards accomplishing something in his department.