

*Yukon Minerals Act*

on their merit. I also hope that the minister and his political supporters on the committee will show the same kind of flexibility to amendments which some of us may propose.

Although I might sympathize with the hon. member for Yukon who suggested the purpose of the amendment, having just now listened to the main thrust of his argument I still find myself in disagreement on the position that he feels should be accepted by the House with regard to the activities of mining corporations in the Yukon or in any part of Canada. I made this clear yesterday. However, I agree, as I think he does, that the committee ought to have the opportunity of listening to their arguments. I think all of us want the mining industry of this country to be a viable, economic activity. We may come, as I think was suggested by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman), somewhat closer to general consensus on this subject than one might think from some remarks made in the debate. So far as I am concerned, that is something for the future.

That brings me to some of the remarks made by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. He suggested that the committee should visit the Yukon Territory in the course of considering this bill. As a member of the committee, this idea has been very much in my mind. Indeed, I have put it forward. It has been discussed in the committee and I am hopeful there will be general agreement that part of the proceedings of the committee can take place in the Yukon Territory. If I heard him correctly, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra also suggested that the committee should visit Vancouver in the course of its examination of this bill because, as he put it, the headquarters of some mining corporations and those interested in mines are in that city.

I say at once that although I have nothing against the idea of a committee visiting Vancouver on occasion, I think in the circumstances it would be much better if the people to whom he referred were to meet the committee in the city of Ottawa after we have had an opportunity of hearing those who live in the Yukon.

• (3:10 p.m.)

The remarks of the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, particularly when he touched on the question of the problems of transportation as they affect mining and economic activity in the northern parts of Canada, including the Yukon Territory, suggest that consideration might be given to the committee visiting and examining the situation in the part of British Columbia where the main transportation gap between the Yukon and Vancouver exists.

**Mr. Nielsen:** How will we get there?

**Mr. Barnett:** We could leave that to the ingenuity of the member for Vancouver Quadra and his colleague, the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Borrie), who is sitting close to him at the moment. The matter indirectly raised by the member for Vancouver Quadra is certainly not new. I am glad that a member from the government side of the House raised the question. If this

[Mr. Barnett.]

House is interested in seeing what is necessary for the Yukon Territory to develop economically, increase its population and improve other aspects of community living, there could be less uncertainty in the mind of the government about the Yukon arriving at full provincial status.

The point by the member for Vancouver Quadra about transportation development is well taken. I am glad this question has been raised by a member on the government side because it has been raised more than once over the years from the opposition side. Until now the federal government has not indicated that it is prepared to take responsibility for some of the steps, financial and otherwise, which would assist in any major way to close the gap.

I remember a debate a number of years ago when it was proposed that federal financial assistance be extended to the provincially-owned railway system, the Pacific Great Eastern, for an extension of that railway northerly from the city of Prince George. The decision of the government at that time, led by the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent, was that the government was prepared to assist to the extent of 50 per cent of the cost of construction up to a maximum of 50 miles northerly from the city of Prince George. That was the limit.

It was suggested at that time that it was not economically viable for the federal authority to be involved in the extension of that railway to any greater extent. As hon. members know, particularly the member for Vancouver Quadra and the member for Prince George-Peace River, that railway system has been extended northerly for a considerably greater distance than 50 miles.

Without having any expert knowledge of the situation, my own view is that it has been a very valuable and economically viable proposition. The connection of that railway to link the Peace River area of British Columbia with the Prince George area and on to the city of Vancouver was an important and constructive step. As hon. members know, extensions to that railway system are in the course of being developed; there is now a thrust of railway construction in the general direction of the Yukon Territory.

In connection with the general subject matter of this bill, it might be desirable for serious consideration to be given by the government and the House to the fact brought out by the member for Vancouver Quadra that there is a real disability to economic development in the Yukon Territory because of inadequacies in the existing transportation system.

As hon. members know, I do not always agree with the ideas put forward by the Premier of the province of British Columbia nor with all the requests he makes to the government of Canada, usually through the medium of newspaper headlines. However, the idea of federal assistance to link by means of the bulk transportation vehicle—the railway—all the lower parts of British Columbia to the Yukon Territory is economically justified. This matter is in the general national interest. It is a program that the federal government should be seriously considering. Whether the Pacific Great Eastern Railway