

improvement. Canadians across the land are increasingly aware of this potential, of the north's importance for Canada's future energy supplies, of the need to protect the northern environment, and of the cultural aspirations of the native people. This national interest in the north is healthy and encouraging. But more important yet is the interest of all northerners in their own affairs.

The bill which is now before the House, Mr. Speaker, is introduced in recognition of the aspirations of the populations of both northern territories for further steps in the evolution of self-government. We are building on the progress which this House legislated a short four years ago. As the population of each territory grows, and as the economy of each territory strengthens, I am confident that further steps will be necessary. I hope that the members of the House will agree that the substantial constitutional advances proposed in this bill are necessary and are worthy of the support of the House.

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, while listening to the minister's opening remarks I thought he was going to treat us to a reading of the annual report. His recital of the recent growth in the industrial and social sectors of the north mystified me because, in spite of his recognition, that development surely merits a much more substantial bill than the one which we have before us today.

We in this party are glad to see the measures in Bill C-9 finally brought before the House, even though it took the government a long time to get around to these few faltering steps toward more autonomy for the northern territories. Within a month after this 29th parliament first sat, now well over a year ago, the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) pointed out to the minister the necessity for a prompt revision of the Yukon Act and the Northwest Territories Act if the changes which are envisaged in Bill C-9 were to be in effect for the territorial council elections scheduled for 1974. That plea fell on unreceptive ears for well over a year, and now we approach the election deadline, making allowance for the six months which the Chief Electoral Officer must have to make the necessary boundary changes and other revisions.

With this deadline upon us we belatedly have Bill C-9 introduced. Because of these limitations in time we will be supporting the amendments in principle. We know they must be enacted speedily, if they are to take effect for the forthcoming elections, and we want to see them implemented as far in advance of that event as is possible. That is not to say, however, that we will not endeavour to have Bill C-9 amended and strengthened at committee stage, but we are cognizant of the deadline situation in which the minister has placed this House and the people of the north by his procrastination which leaves us no choice but to accept the major provisions of this bill.

● (1530)

I hope the minister is equally ardent in his wish for speedy passage of Bill C-6 regarding the national parks and that he will work with the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) to have that bill reintroduced at report stage at the earliest possible date. We have given our assurance on a number of occasions that we would welcome the speedy completion of deliberation on the

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parks bill. We want to see the new parks formally established, and I would encourage the minister to have that bill brought forward immediately and passed. Certainly, that is the wish of members in this party.

Having said that we will support the provisions of Bill C-9, an act to amend the Yukon Act, the Northwest Territories Act and the Canada Elections Act, in principle, I wish to make it very clear to the minister that we are in no way satisfied with this simplistic piece of legislation which he has laboured so long and hard to produce. Speaking in the throne speech debate, I emphasized that this party would look for something more than mere tinkering with the political structures in the Territories when the amendments to the Yukon Act and the Northwest Territories Act were introduced.

The concession before us to allow for a fully elected council in the Northwest Territories is important. The addition of five members to the Yukon Council will provide more adequate representation, but surely the minister is not trying to make us believe that by merely playing a numbers game he is removing the stigma of colonialism which permeates the north. Numbers of elected representatives can fluctuate, appointed councillors can come and go, but until real authority, fiscal authority, is handed over to the elected councils, parliamentary democracy in the north remains a sham and a facade.

Mr. Nielsen: Hear, hear! Amen!

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, basic to parliamentary democracy is the right of elected representatives to influence decisions regarding expenditure of public moneys. Where that right does not exist, democracy does not exist. Our parliamentary traditions are based upon British democratic practice going back for hundreds of years to Magna Carta. These practices and rights were demanded by the 13 colonies which later formed the United States. We still deny these practices and rights to our northern territories. The minister skirted around this situation this afternoon. He has toyed with it, but he has not committed himself to the objective of fiscal responsibility for the Northwest Territories. He has in no way dealt with section 24 of the Yukon Act or section 21 of the Northwest Territories Act, sections which deny rights, privileges and fiscal responsibility to the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. These sections state in part that it is not lawful for the council to adopt, pass or vote upon a resolution, address or bill for the appropriation of any part of the public revenues to the territories that has not been first recommended to the council by message of the commissioner—in other words, of the government of Canada. The budgets of the territorial councils are determined by an interdepartmental committee in Ottawa, not by the people of the north through their elected council representatives.

Mr. Speaker, I would advise the minister that at committee stage it will be our intention to present amendments which would have the effect of eliminating these sections from the Yukon and Northwest Territories Acts. I state that intention, Mr. Speaker, not knowing at this point whether such a motion will be considered in order. But if these sections were to be removed, the elected representatives on the territorial councils could then be