

Northwest Territories Act

have liked, there is the same power of veto on the part of the elected members of the council provided for in clause 1—

Mr. Nielsen: No.

Mr. Barnett:—over proposals for the raising or spending of funds. In other words, we have no power to initiate proposals in respect of spending estimates but we do have the power if we so wish to disapprove of the proposals which the executive places before us. To this extent at least it seems to me it is a desirable step forward toward separating the executive and the legislative functions of the council of the Northwest Territories, having regard to the constitutional position in the legislatures of the provinces and the parliament of Canada.

Mr. Nielsen: Surely this is a backward step.

Mr. Barnett: I hear the member for Yukon saying that this is a backward step. As I said earlier, I am relating my remarks to my experience in serving on a municipal council where the legislative and the executive functions are combined. As I understand the current situation, this is the position which exists now in that the majority have been appointed members and in effect have been an executive rather than a legislative body.

● (1:30 p.m.)

I feel that we all agree on our understanding of parliamentary institutions, and we are moving in the right direction if we take this step of separation of executive and legislative functions so that there is at least some parallel between the initiating power of the executive and the legislative power to veto. I am quite sure that the minister, the government of Canada and certainly this parliament, to whom the executive is responsible, would be disposed to take a serious look at a situation where the elected legislative council of the Northwest Territories rejected out of hand either the taxing or spending proposals put forward by the commissioner. I am certain that most of us in this house would be inclined to take a look at such a situation. As elected representatives ourselves we might have something to say as to the course of action we thought the commissioner, under direction from the minister and the governor in council, should take in that event.

I suggest that indirectly the legislative council in which the elected representatives have a majority is in a position to take action if they are dissatisfied with the proposals put

[Mr. Barnett.]

forward by the commissioner, even though he is appointed, to a greater degree than they have been in the past.

Mr. Dinsdale: I should like to speak for a moment, Mr. Chairman, on the question propounded by the minister. While he was actually putting it to the hon. member for Yukon, this member has, as he has stated, been put in a position where he is serving the general interests of the north during his participation in this discussion. This means he has taken a high level, non-partisan approach. I must say too, from my association with the hon. member for Yukon when I was minister, that he was just as forceful in his non-partisan presentations in those days as he has been in his non-partisan presentations during this important discussion.

The point made by the minister was, why did the former administration not proceed to greater autonomy in the Northwest Territories when it had the responsibility? I can only reply in that regard, as I did earlier today, that we did have a long term plan for the future of self-government in the north. Included in that long term plan, and it was not very long term at that, was a provision for increasing autonomy until the time would be reached when we would be able to proceed to grant provincial rights to both the Yukon and Northwest Territories. The particular target date that was in mind by the former administration was the year 1967. We have focused on the year 1967 for the past several years as the occasion when major breakthroughs could be made with respect to many important functions and activities in this country.

Since we would be celebrating our one hundredth birthday in 1967 it would be particularly important, as you may well realize, for a Conservative administration to mark that occasion with a continuation of the policies of the first Conservative administration under Sir John A. Macdonald which made this nation possible. I am not revealing any secrets with regard to cabinet policy because the then prime minister, the right hon. member for Prince Albert, on several occasions in public statements referred to 1967 as the occasion when it was hoped both the northern territories would have moved a considerable distance in the direction of provincial autonomy.

The minister has made the argument on several occasions that the north is a deficit area of Canada requiring subsidization by the central government. I remind him, and I am