

*Government Orders*

was called and, of course, like so many other of the Prime Minister's promises, it has not been kept.

The north is remembered, it seems, when we have something the rest of Canada wants—our resources, for example. We are not a storehouse to be plundered. But that is how we have been treated. We do not get any royalties from the development of our natural resources. How many Canadians and how many members of the House know that? All the royalties flow out of the territories.

And now, the environment. Protecting the environment has become an essential component of the government's agenda because of public opinion and pressure. The new focus on the Arctic environment, we feel, has not sprung from a deep concern within the government, but rather from the pressure of ordinary concerned Canadians.

Because of our small population and our limited tax base, we are financially dependent on the federal government and we do not fully control our destinies. Over the past couple of decades, through a process of devolution, we have been taking over more and more of the powers exercised for us by the federal government. Except for the control and management of our natural resources, the territorial governments function essentially in the same way as provincial governments, but we are not yet provinces.

Provincehood is not just around the corner. It will be several more years before either the Yukon or the Northwest Territories are prepared to become provinces, and the Yukon will probably achieve provincehood first. In the Northwest Territories, we are discussing the division of our territory into two territories. The eastern territory will be known as Nunavut.

Although all of this is some time away, this is to show that we have constitutional aspirations and objectives. We do not want to be cut off at the pass, and we do not want the door shut in our face. We do not want our options to be limited. We want to make our decisions out of a full range of choices, the same choices other regions of the country had before they became provinces.

We are not asking for anything more than anyone else had in the country. We are asking simply for the same treatment.

When the various regions of the country became provinces, they did so in a bilateral agreement with the federal government. Saskatchewan, for example, and Newfoundland negotiated on a bilateral basis with the federal government. No other province in the country had a role in that decision. The matter was negotiated and agreed to by only the region concerned and the federal government. That was the way new provinces were created in this country until 1982.

In 1982, the new amending formula changed that practice. Under the new amending formula, the creation of provinces suddenly was subject to the agreement of seven out of 10 provinces having 50 per cent of the Canadian population.

The seven plus 50 rule was a dramatic departure from the historical practice. The territories saw their constitutional aspirations being limited. Another concern was the fact that changes could be made to territorial boundaries with the consent of seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the population. No voice was given to the territories regarding future changes to their borders. Boundaries of existing provinces could be extended into the north without any consultation with the Northwest Territories.

The north protested. The entire legislative assembly of the Northwest Territories flew to Ottawa to express their concerns through the government.

A year later some progress was made. In the 1983 constitutional conference, the federal government, nine provincial premiers, the leaders of four national aboriginal organizations, and the leaders of the two territorial governments signed the constitutional accord. That 1983 constitutional accord contained an agenda of issues which all the participants had agreed to discuss at future constitutional meetings.

The amending formula issues identified by the territories—namely, the creation of new provinces and the extension of provincial boundaries into the territories—were on that agenda for future constitutional discussions. That agenda, Mr. Speaker, remains unfinished. Although there were two more aboriginal constitutional conferences after 1983, one in 1985 and one in 1987, these issues were not discussed. The federal government had changed and aboriginal self-government had become the primary focus of discussions.