

self-government and democratic rights for the territory. I was amazed to hear first hand of the kinds of conditions endured by people in the two territories under our present constitution. It really boils down to being a colonial administration. The head of the government in both the Yukon and the Northwest Territories is a commissioner who is appointed by and solely responsible to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The elected representatives of the people sit in the Territorial council but lack authority and responsibility to govern their respective territories. They are summoned only at the commissioner's pleasure, and any proposals by the elected representatives of the people can be vetoed by the commissioner or the minister. The people of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories are quite conscious of this discrimination and are arguing vigorously for responsible government, the responsible government that we established once and for all in this country, I thought, back in 1838 with Lord Durham's report.

Why are people in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories second class citizens on matters that affect their daily lives? The arguments Ottawa uses today are the same that the British Colonial office and the Family Compact in Upper Canada used in the 1830s. Just as they were irrelevant then, they are irrelevant now.

I would like to quote very briefly from a speech made by the leader of the NDP in the Yukon, Mr. Tony Penikett, at the founding convention in 1973. I could not express it more eloquently and I believe that here we hear the voice of the Yukon. It reads:

We are 20,000 people in an area of 275,000 square miles. Many of us were born here. Many more came here seeking a new and better way of life. We all live here because we choose to. We all hope to make a better life for ourselves and our families here in the Yukon. In this hope we experience a great deal of frustration and anger in finding how little control we have over our own destinies. We live under what seems to be suffocating bureaucratic control of every aspect of the community. In so many ways it is clear to us that something is wrong. The government is out of sight and out of touch. In trying to find a pattern to government policy we can only conclude that the policies are directed towards making the north just like everywhere else, and if there is one thing on which we Yukoners are united in opposition to the government—it is that. We do not want the north to be just like everywhere else.

Mr. Nielsen: May I inject a comment and say to the hon. member that the Liberal Association in the Yukon is also in favour of this resolution.

Mr. Symes: The problem is that the Liberal Association does not walk in the corridors of power here in Ottawa. Let me continue reading Mr. Penikett's speech as follows:

In the past federal governments, have suggested certain criteria must be met before we can be allowed a responsible Yukon government. The most common criteria mentioned are sufficient population, sufficient money, and the legislative competence of the Yukon Territorial Council. But what have members to do with the principle of self government? What is the price tag on autonomy? How is an impotent territorial council to get a stab at balancing the Yukon's books, when they have no power to introduce money bills? It is an absurd and circular argument to say our territorial council is irresponsible because it is not responsible. Of course, it might be responsible, but not without responsibilities.

The Territories

In reference to the people of the Yukon, at the national convention of the NDP in 1973 a resolution was passed, that is now party policy, that the Yukon be given full provincial status. Of course, that means responsible government. Here we have in the Yukon people who have experience in governing without the power. We have people who have experience living in the north, knowing the conditions of the north, but their pleas fall on deaf ears when they come to the bureaucrats in Ottawa and, indeed, on many occasions the minister himself.

The situation in the Northwest Territories is quite similar. There are 38,000 residents there who, unfortunately, have to face the highest cost of living in this country, the lowest per capita income, the greatest transportation costs, the lowest health and nutritional standards, and the highest rate of infant mortality. This is a sad situation, despite the millions of dollars spent by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the many years of Ottawa conceived and directed policies which, of course, have not solved the problems of the Northwest Territories.

• (1730)

People in the Northwest Territories desire to change this paternalism, but they are frustrated, as Yukoners are, by the lack of self government, self government which all other Canadians enjoy. They have no real and effective voice in the decision making process. Time and time again they hear the phrase, "Ottawa knows best". How can anyone argue that Ottawa knows best when we look at the conditions surrounding the daily lives of people of the Northwest Territories? Even the recommendations of the government's own committees and other advisory bodies fall on deaf ears.

I would like to quote very briefly from a government appointed advisory committee on the development of government in the Northwest Territories which sat under the chairmanship of A. W. R. Carrothers. In its 1966 report it set forth as its first postulate:

Every citizen has a claim to participate in the institutions of responsible government under the Canadian constitution.

It added this further postulate:

Every resident of the Northwest Territories for whom freedom of movement within and without the Territories is not a realistic fact has a claim to economic opportunity that will provide a standard of living that does not deviate substantially from the Canadian norm

We have had commissions and we have advisory groups. Again the government does not listen to them, just as it does not listen to the people living in the north. There are many key questions facing northerners upon which northerners have a right to express their views, questions which will affect their daily lives, such as the resource development of the north; the whole issue of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline and the economic and environmental implications of such a pipeline; the question of oil and gas royalties for people living in the north. We do not have time, but I could go into the absolutely ridiculous low rates of royalties which the federal government charges oil companies and mining companies in the Yukon and in the Northwest Territories.