

ries? I think it has brought the foolishness of the situation into clear perspective.

Mr. Nielsen: And the cancellation of existing land leases.

Mr. Dinsdale: Yes. I will deal with that in a moment. The decree that came from the minister on January 10 was for prohibition of any further alienation. It also included the cancellation of existing leaseholds. The problem has been brought into focus by the Northwest Territories Farmers' Association. It is true that there is sufficient interest in farming in the Northwest Territories to have an association.

Mr. Nielsen: And in the Yukon.

Mr. Dinsdale: I agree with the hon. member for Yukon that this is developing on parallel lines in both the territories. As a result of the negative policy that was forthcoming, the Northwest Territories Farmers' Association gathered together to discuss the dilemma. They were particularly concerned about the Benoit family who had moved into the area near Fort Providence and were operating at the Horn River in the Northwest Territories. They had invested in their farm four years of their time and all their savings. The project had received encouragement from the government of the Northwest Territories. Indeed, it was the government of the Northwest Territories that encouraged the Benois and other enterprising Canadian citizens like them to venture into the northern part of Canada and pioneer in establishing a viable agricultural industry.

It was a tip-off from a member of the territorial government that first brought this problem to my attention. I have been able to research the matter further in some of the colourful newspapers that are published in the Northwest Territories. I shall be dealing later with some of the interesting comments in the newspaper published at Fort Smith under the name *The Pilot*.

● (1530)

I should like to refer to another strange anomaly to be found within the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Under the decree to which I have referred, the department ordered the Benois off the land within 90 days—this, Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that they had invested considerable sums of money, that they had had the encouragement and support of the territorial government of the Northwest Territories, and that in attempting to assist this family in their worthwhile efforts to establish a herd of cattle, the government of the Northwest Territories had been supplying them with feed. Yet in the face of these concrete realities we have a decree suspending this activity, that forces them off the land, and which says they have to wait two or three years until an agricultural policy can be formulated.

Mr. Nielsen: They were told to get off.

Mr. Dinsdale: Yes, I said they were ordered off the land. No decision apparently can be made for a period of two or three years. This must be bureaucratic bungling gone mad.

Mr. Nielsen: It is not bungling; it is intentional policy.

Territorial Lands Act

Mr. Dinsdale: Well, whatever it is, I trust that the parliamentary secretary will convey the message to his minister, who I am sorry is not here today to hear some of these comments. He is the kind of man who, if he were aware of the implications in terms of human privation, would not have anything to do with policy enunciations of this kind. I wonder whether there was any consultation with the Department of Agriculture. When you are dealing with agricultural policy in a part of Canada one would think the Department of Agriculture would be consulted.

Mr. Nielsen: That would make things worse.

Mr. Dinsdale: I do not think it could be any worse, and I hope it would be better. I also wonder what has happened to the excellent experiment that had been going on for a period of 20 years at Fort Simpson. I read with some degree of concern that this experimental station, which I had the opportunity to view when I was minister, had been phased out, and at the time it seemed to me that this was a retrograde step. However, I was not at all aware that the situation had deteriorated to the level indicated by the problem that was outlined here today.

Let me deal with the matter in terms of the colourful writing that comes out of the Northwest Territories and Yukon by the people who are actually grappling with the real problems of human and resource development north of 60. In its issue for February 20, 1975, *The Pilot* carries this headline: "There's an awful smell of bull manure and it's not from the farmers' feet." The article goes on to report the meeting of the Northwest Territories Farmers' Association which tried to get some justice and to find a sensible solution to the problems facing the farmers in the Northwest Territories. More to the point, Madam Speaker, in the editorial column the subject is dealt with under the heading "Is democracy dead in NWT?" The editorial stated:

The plight of the farmer in the Northwest Territories, as reported on page 1, only goes on to prove even more conclusively the need for immediate provincial status for the north.

The fact that one department of government can control everything in the north from development of land to the development of non-renewable resources, almost without reference to other government departments, and most certainly without reference to the people who are most directly involved—us—is nothing less than a complete and utter waiving of our rights as Canadian citizens.

If I may interpolate, how many times have we heard that complaint as we have travelled, for example, into the north as representatives of the Indian affairs committee? Then further along in the editorial:

Again it is a case of the civil servant sitting behind his Ottawa desk, who has probably never been further north than his television set, dictating what we can and cannot do north of the 60th parallel.

The whole of Canada was built by people with a little imagination, a little money and a hellofa lot of hard work—a term which most of the Ottawa oafs think means bending paper clips into grotesque shapes. The west would still be buffalo range if there were not a few adventurous souls willing to "take a chance" on making a living outside the boundaries of civilization at that time. Today, the north is no different. It is still going to take people with a little imagination—

They mean people like the Benois, who are being persecuted because of their initiative.

—a little money and a hellofa lot of hard work to make a viable living in the north if they want to retain any semblance of independence.