

Government Orders

• (1630)

We all know what happens historically after every election when we get a change in government from the Liberals to the Conservatives. It will be the Reform the next time around. When we get a change in government, we see harbour boards and transportation boards, all kinds of boards that are stacked with political appointments automatically, mysteriously overnight all the faces change. We saw it after the last election in October of last year.

A great deal of partisan political manoeuvring goes on with these appointments. As much as our friends on the other side of the House will hasten to say there will be no partisanship here, of course there will be. That is the way it works.

We would like to see local business people submit a list of names to the minister. From that list of names the minister could make his appointments. At least that would remove some of the partisan opportunities or the partisan influence that this board might have in the future. It is very important for the mining industry and it is very important for people to believe that this board is going to be impartial.

It is a requirement that three people sit in judgment of each individual case that is arbitrated by the board. One of these people must be from the Council of Yukon Indians. However it is not a requirement that one individual be from the business industry or from the mining industry.

This board has the potential to be skewed and could give decisions that are not based on the proper representation that we think should be required.

The board will mediate disputes as to who may cross land. What will happen on undeveloped settlement land is something that is also a concern of ours. What will happen to non-settlement lands? The board has a fair bit of influence over lands which are not directly included in the land claims agreement. This is something that we are concerned about and I am sure the mining industry is as well.

This board parallels the work of other boards that are already in place. We say therefore that it is duplication. Each board member is allowed to use contract workers such as advisers who are also paid on a per diem basis. Board members are paid on a per diem basis. A multiple array of experts at DIAND are sitting around fully capable of acting as contract workers, already being paid by the taxpayers.

Why not select from these people who are already employed rather than hiring contract workers at an additional expense to the taxpayers?

Furthermore, because the work of the board is going to be on a per diem basis, there is a possibility that the board's deliberations will drag out far longer than they need to, especially when the board members are being paid between \$200 and \$300 a day.

We would like to see some kind of a mechanism to make the board accountable for the length of time that it engages in deliberations and to make sure that its actions are kept at an absolute minimum.

The potential for conflict of interest is also there because claims are not assumed to be reviewed by the entire board but by a panel of three. At least one must be a member appointed to the board from the Council of Yukon Indians and two others are to be chosen by the chairperson. Could this not end with a blatant bias or conflict if all were from the Council of Yukon Indians? There are no rules to the contrary.

If the government is so concerned about allowing aboriginal peoples to have a say in surface and subsurface rights or subsurface uses of the land—I believe there is room for that—I have to question the government's concern over the ability of aboriginals in the Yukon to have a say in land use decisions. This concern apparently does not apply to the Champagne and Aishihik peoples whose traditional territories include the Tatshenshini-Alsek area of northwest British Columbia.

• (1635)

The Champagne-Aishihik people live primarily in the Yukon, but their traditional territories are the Tatshenshini-Alsek area and what is now the Kluane park. Economic opportunities were lost to these peoples when the Kluane national park, also a part of their traditional territories, was created in 1943.

They are now facing the prospect of seeing the Tatshenshini-Alsek designated a world heritage site by the United Nations. This proposal has been submitted to the United Nations, and is supported by the B.C. and federal governments. Our information is that the vote will be on December 14 of this year. If it is adopted by the United Nations it is going to take away Canada's sovereignty and ability to make decisions or reverse decisions on this land for all time.

I recently came into the possession of a letter written by Chief Paul Birckel who represents the Champagne-Aishihik First Nations. He writes to the premier of British Columbia expressing his concern, disappointment and frustration over the fact that the province of British Columbia has designated this area as a class A provincial park, without any consultation whatsoever with the Champagne-Aishihik people.

Now the federal government has come on board by agreeing to support the province of British Columbia having the area designated as a world heritage site. I would like to read a small bit from the letter that Chief Birckel has written to Premier Harcourt: