

The Territories

As for the Northwest Territories' Council it gave its support to Bill C-9 in the resolution already referred to. The people in that area also look forward to the day when their administration can move up to political and constitutional self-government. But I think it is desirable to give them some time to adapt to the changes involved. I realize my hon. friend from Yukon wishes this to be accomplished during his term in Parliament. He hopes to become the first premier of the province of Yukon, but I do not believe this can be done now. The government should be in a position to closely monitor developments to ensure timely changes. The ministers will above all wish to take into account the political situation in the territories when following the practice of naming councillors to the executive committee.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, the government has demonstrated its willingness to prepare the emergence to full government responsibility by both territorial administrations. I feel, as stated in the national purposes for the Canadian north, that the transition must be made in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the inhabitants of the north. Considering the increased participation of northern natives in territorial affairs and their representations to the government, it can be concluded that those wishes and aspirations are changing. Time is necessary to consider their meaning.

Mr. Speaker, even if I somewhat took the member for Yukon to task this afternoon, I must thank him for providing to the House the opportunity of considering northern development, an issue increasingly affecting almost every Canadian. I told him that if he intends to set up his own political party in the new province of Yukon, he could suggest as Lieutenant Governor a native of the Territories.

● (1730)

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question? I know that some of the hon. member's ancestors went to the Yukon during the days of the gold rush. Does he not think that by what he is saying he is causing them to turn over in their graves?

Mr. Cyr: Yes, and they also married Indians.

[Translation]

Today we saw and examined the progress made in this area in recent years, and we are now aware of the need to bring in other changes. I think those changes are only a matter of time. I am also convinced that the government will bring them about just as effectively as those that have already been made.

Mr. Speaker, in concluding I would be remiss if I did not point out that when I was chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development we had the opportunity to visit the Yukon on a number of occasions, and even the Northwest Territories, and I must say that we received a warm welcome.

I also think that my colleague for Yukon will remember that the new leader of his party, the hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark), when we went to Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk and Yellowknife in August 1968, was at that time on his honeymoon trip with us.

[Mr. Cyr.]

And that was in 1968. I think it is worth recalling that trip we made with the hon. member for Rocky Mountain in the north on that occasion because he was interested in those two territories. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I think that concludes my remarks on motion No. 13 now before us.

[English]

Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have this opportunity to say a few words in this debate on the motion put forward by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). I will read the motion so that it will form part of the speech I will send to my constituents in order that they will know what remarks I have made in this House. The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should immediately introduce legislation to implement the resolutions of the Yukon Territorial Council and the Northwest Territorial Council requesting that the government apply those principles of constitutional and democratic development that will establish a fully representative and responsible system of government to the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories respectively.

This is a very important motion and I am happy to see it debated here. It is time that something was done to change the situation in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. We have a colonial situation. Although we have fully elected bodies, they can be overruled by an appointed civil servant. That is an intolerable situation in this day and age.

I believe, as I am sure many other northerners believe, that we can capably look after our own affairs in both territories. Many people doubt whether we can pay our own way. If we are not doing so now, we certainly could with the utilization of the natural resources in that part of the country.

We are only asking for a democratic right that most Canadians now enjoy. What kind of government would be most suitable is a point that could be debated. Certainly it should be one that is fully responsible, with full taxation powers and so on. The argument about there not being a big enough population does not hold water.

I remind the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Cyr) of a certain visit to the north. I was happy to hear him refer to a visit to the Yukon and Northwest Territories. I remind him of what took place at Whitehorse in the Yukon on December 12, 1972. At that time the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development was travelling in the north. The hon. member will recall a motion passed by that committee, which was chaired by the present Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Buchanan). I am sure the hon. member for Gaspé voted in favour of that resolution calling for full responsible government for the Yukon. The hon. member now seems to speak completely against what he voted for in the Yukon. He said one thing when he was in the north, and now says something else when he is here.

Mr. Paproski: He speaks with forked tongue.

Mr. Firth: We are only asking for a democratic right that most Canadians enjoy. I say that we can pay our own way, considering what we have in the Northwest Territories. I will only give a partial list. There are two gold mines operating in the city of Yellowknife, and a lead-zinc mine