

Mr. BLACK (Yukon): Is something new contemplated this year in the way of arctic exploration and the establishment of government up there?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): There is no notion of establishing government. The government is carried on here. I rather appreciate what the hon. member (Mr. McTaggart) has said with respect to the work of the Interior department, because perhaps no members realize the quantity of work that is being carried on in the department better than those from the prairie provinces.

Mr. STEVENS: Except those from the Arctic circle.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I will come to that later. The work of the department is also appreciated by a large proportion of the province from which my hon. friend comes. The ramifications of the department are almost empire-wide, and a great deal of trouble is caused if we make a mistake in a lease or if we trip up in the slightest with respect to a payment. At the present time I am endeavouring to straighten out difficulties that occurred in connection with the distribution of seed grain in 1876. I want the committee to have an appreciation of the responsibilities of the officials of this department. We perform every function of a government, and I think hon. gentlemen who come from Alberta will agree with me that the Department of the Interior is performing almost as much service in the leasing of coal mines, grazing leases, timber leases and their operation in Alberta as is the provincial government in their work, and to a very fair degree we have almost comparable responsibility.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): The minister, as no doubt he remembers very clearly, was at one time premier of that province. If all he says is true as to the tremendous scope of the work of the department, would he think the restoration of the natural resources of Alberta would be of great value to that province?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I should not like to express any opinion about it. I do not believe that the province would either lose or gain very much by the acquisition of its resources but I do think that Alberta and other western provinces have a right to be put on an equality with the rest of the Dominion. That is my contention; but from the monetary point of view I do not think they stand to gain very much. It is doubtful. While the department is being criticized on the score of its size we must remember that

when we get beyond the belt in British Columbia and enter the Yukon territory, which my hon. friend (Mr. Black) has the honour to represent, we have a tremendous area inhabited by very few people; and the hon. member himself will agree with me that our administration costs when we get up there are pretty high. We hope that we shall be able to reduce them. And in the northwest we have a whole empire about which most of us know very little. There are great possibilities of mineral wealth there, and it seems to me that we must take no chances on anybody else going into that territory and laying claim to any land that belongs to us. I am taking every precaution possible to prevent anything of that kind occurring. I am criticized in some quarters for the precision of statements I have made in the House, but these statements have been made after due consideration. If expeditions from foreign countries desire to go into that north country I think the least they can do is to obtain a permit from the government of the Northwest Territories to enter what is clearly our land.

An hon. member has said that we are extending the service somewhat in the Northwest Territories, and into the Arctic particularly. We have had disquieting rumours with reference to the Eskimo situation. But Dr. Rasmussen was here a short time ago and I must say he brought us rather reassuring news. The territory is so remote that we know very little about it; we know only the fringe of it and very little about that, and when you get into the confines of Coronation gulf and to the immediate north you are in almost unknown quarters. I propose to send one of our officials across that territory this year, and it is our intention to have Mr. Mackenzie make a rather close study of the situation. The Eskimos have not received very much attention at the hands of this government, but we are becoming more alive to our responsibilities in that regard. One of the first things to be done is to get more men with at least some medical training who will act as missionaries among the Eskimos in the north country with a view to preventing some of the disasters which occasionally are reported to us from these remote districts. The country is valuable for its fur and we have no idea as to its possibilities in the way of mineral development. And even in the far north we have valuable animals such as the musk ox. I have here a map which gives a comprehensive idea of the territory to which we lay claim in the north country, showing the land that has already been explored. It