

Yukon and N.W.T. Government

hon. member in view of his particular interest in the resolution, but I draw his attention to the fact that there are at least two hon. members who want to speak. I should like to recognize the hon. member for Pontiac (Mr. Lefebvre) and the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett). I am prepared to allow the hon. member another question if he insists, but I invite his co-operation.

Mr. Nielsen: I have a very short question to ask the minister. Will he assure the House that his bill concerning the Yukon will not be introduced until after he has spoken to the delegation of councillors, particularly in view of his reply to my previous question in that regard?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I do not know when this meeting will come about, so I cannot give that assurance. If the councillors come in a week or two, the bill will probably not be ready.

[Translation]

Mr. T. Lefebvre (Pontiac): Mr. Speaker, I am very much interested in this motion because I had the pleasure to visit the Territories with the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) on November 10, 11 and 12. I was not long in noting that the minister is very well known in this huge country and that he had studied in detail problems concerning not only the citizens of the Territories but also all Canadians.

I notice that most of the people living in the Territories trust the minister and know that he is loyal, efficient and honest. We are really happy to have a man of his character to head such an important department, not only for the citizens of the Territories themselves but for all Canadians.

The minister has been holding his portfolio for less than two years and he has already visited the whole Territories. When you consider that this part of the country represents 35 per cent of Canada's total surface, you realize the size of the land the minister has to look after.

During the few remaining minutes at my disposal, I do not intend to give the impression that I have become an expert after spending only three days in the North.

I just want to share the memories I have from my discussions with the citizens of that part of the country.

I attended several meetings where the minister delivered speeches, for instance in Fort

Smith and Yellowknife, in the Northwest Territories, and in Whitehorse in the Yukon.

Each time, people listened closely to those speeches, which were warmly applauded. Personally, I was in a position each time to observe the reactions of the citizens.

I had talks with dozens of people, before and after the minister's speeches, and I got the impression that the majority of these citizens did not expect the minister to announce the establishment of provincial status.

They certainly feel neglected sometimes, and if I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest to my colleagues that they visit that part of the country each time they have the opportunity to do it. I am sure that all those who will be able to go there will, like me, return from their visit with a feeling of satisfaction and will remember the warm welcome from the people of the territories.

The problems these people are facing are almost of the same nature as those of my electors: they are asking for more roads, better communications, a better standard of living, a promising future for their children and the opportunity to live in peace.

[English]

The minister also mentioned his participation in the hot-line program while he was on his northern visit. I was with the minister on that occasion and should like to endorse what he said. For almost one hour he received calls from citizens all over the north country, not one of whom raised the subject of wider powers for the council or provincial status for the Territories.

Mr. Nielsen: The minister had not spoken about constitutional development.

Mr. Lefebvre: The minister might not have spoken about it, but the way you talk one would think this was the only thing in the minds of the people up there. I endorse what the minister has said. They have problems similar to the problems in other parts of Canada. They do not think only about provincial status, as the hon. member is trying to make this House believe. They are thinking of many other things.

Mr. Dinsdale: Government by open line.

Mr. Lefebvre: You fellows have all made your speeches. I only have two minutes left and would like to use them, if you do not mind. In speaking of the Carrothers Report I should like to read a couple of lines.