

*The Address—Mr. Nielsen*

Indian Affairs and Northern Development, a gentleman who has been at that post less than a year. The day to day affairs are really being managed by the elected members or the executive committee. We are totally unrepresented at that most important conference taking place today because of this situation.

I presume that the commissioner of the Northwest Territories is present at the conference, but a fat lot of good that will do him because, as part of the federal delegation, he will be sitting there as another civil servant and the views of northerners will not be heard whatsoever. That is the main subject upon which I wish to speak today.

I received a letter from the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on July 25, 1978, in which he refers to a questionnaire that it is my habit to circulate throughout the Yukon from time to time. In the letter he refers to the questions with respect to provincial status where I was seeking to establish, through the questionnaire, what proportion of Yukon residents was in favour of it, and what proportion was opposed. He writes as follows:

● (1212)

I am puzzled by question number 4. I would be most interested in knowing what method you have in mind to pay for the cost of provincehood for the Yukon without an increase in taxes or alternatively, a reduction in government services, both of which are underlying premises of question 4.

I would be most interested if you could write to me and elaborate on the ways this could be accomplished.

With tongue in cheek he finishes by saying:

I trust the discussion of this problem will not compromise the well known position of your party.

Because a full reply to the letter would have constituted several pages, if not a small book, I decided to use the vehicle of the throne speech debate to reply. I trust when he receives *Hansard* tomorrow he will read my remarks carefully and take them as a reply to his letter.

It is well known that the national policy of this party is that if it be the desire, the will, of the people of the Yukon, that if the people of the Yukon want provincial status, that will be achieved within the first term of office of prime minister Clark and his government. That is as it should be. We in northern Canada, as Canadians, are asking for no more but no less than the rights and privileges enjoyed by all other Canadians. The answer to the questionnaire which I sent out came back with 65 per cent of those returning it indicating the affirmative, namely, that they would desire provincial status.

The position of the New Democratic Party on this point has always been one of waffling. They say out of one side of their mouths that fully responsible government is a good thing, that all Canadians should enjoy it, and the Yukon is no exception. Then they say, "Mind you, you are not ready for it yet, but sometime in the future it will be satisfactory to meet this very valid desire of the citizens of the Yukon."

On the other hand, the position of the government can best be summed up by using the words of the Prime Minister around August 17 last year. In Whitehorse, he said that the

[Mr. Nielsen.]

Yukon would never be a province within his lifetime. Mr. Speaker, I do not wish the Prime Minister any ill will, but if he is setting that timetable all I can do is hasten his demise because the sooner the people of the Yukon are allowed to express their will on this matter, and the sooner we have a government that will respect that will, the sooner we are going to have the same rights and freedoms that are enjoyed by all Canadian citizens.

I want to contrast the position of the Prime Minister with the position of his own party in the Yukon. The Yukon provincial Liberal party was established four years ago, in 1974. As stated in its constitution, its objectives were as follows:

(a) To advance the social and economic interests of all the people of the Yukon;

That is laudable.

(b) To advocate and support Yukon Liberal principles and policies;

Whatever is meant by that.

(c) To secure full responsible government and provincial status for the Yukon.

They at least are in tune with the wishes of the people of the Yukon. We now find that very noted Liberals, including the Prime Minister, are saying that provincial status is certainly not going to be achieved within his lifetime, and our estimable senator in the other place, Senator Lucier, saying that provincial status is something the people of the Yukon do not deserve, that it is just a stupid policy entirely.

In a draft paper entitled "Outline Platform," issued in 1974, the objectives of the party are set out. The first heading is "Provincial Government" with the subheading "Policy Aim: to achieve provincial status." The next heading is "Policy Objectives," and I will have something to say about this policy of theirs later. It lists the objectives as follows:

—immediate authority for the administration, distribution and disposal of Yukon land

—totally elected executive

—evolution of the role of Commissioner to that of Lieutenant Governor

—assume immediate responsibility for forestry, health, solicitor general's office, and those other administrative areas provincial in scope

—establish a formula for taking over responsibility for resources

I think the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth) will be interested in the next one:

—to achieve an end to the Indian Act by a negotiated fair land settlement, with strong Yukoner input, between Yukon Indians and the federal government, to achieve:

—eradication of racial inequities

—a land in which everyone is subject to the same laws and has the same responsibilities to the Yukon

So, Mr. Speaker, four years ago the Yukon Liberal party took a firm stance in favour of what we in this party stand for nationally, but at the same time the Prime Minister and the government were refusing us full participation in the democratic life of our country. The Liberal party of the Yukon was completely swallowing itself because of the Prime Minister's statement a year ago last August to the effect that provincial status is not a good idea.