

An hon. Member: The minister explained all that.

Mr. Nielsen: I know what the minister said by way of explanation to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin). I also know that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) and I are good friends, and if we cannot have a violent clash of ideas on these questions, there is something wrong with this chamber. I intend to have that violent and thorough clash with the minister, because this is an important matter not only for Parliament but for the people I represent and the people the minister is responsible for above the 60th parallel. There is nothing wrong with that.

The minister said that he discussed the question of the amendment to sections of the Yukon Act with the hon. member for Northwest Territories and that the hon. member agreed to those amendments. He can say something like that when dealing with amendments to the Northwest Territories Act, but we are not dealing with that Act now. We are not there; we are dealing with an amendment to the Yukon Act. Really, what the minister's officers have done here is to disguise a most odious and pernicious amendment affecting the principle of consultation that was written into this clause by the committee, I might say unanimously by all including the Liberal members on the committee.

If hon. members will consult the original version of the bill they will see that the Yukon Act, on page 1, gave the Governor in Council the absolute power to dissolve the council at any time he pleased. That meant that the power resided in the minister. This matter did not concern any quarrel between the members of the council and the commissioner, who is a public servant taking his directions from the minister, but a quarrel that might arise between the minister and the elected representatives of the people of the Yukon. It has to do with the Yukon, and not the Northwest Territories.

In its wisdom and in accordance with the precepts of participatory democracy, the committee thought that it would be a good idea if the minister, in exercising this power, could say to the elected members of the Yukon Council, seven in number, "All right boys, pack it up. Go home. You are to have another election." So, unanimously the committee said that the Governor-in-Council can only do that after he has consulted with members of the council. What does the minister's amendment

Yukon and Territorial Lands Act

on the notice paper do? It says that he may consult with the council only if he deems such consultation to be practicable. That lets him off the hook immediately. It does not stop there.

Mr. Chrétien: No, the hon. member is incorrect.

Mr. Nielsen: Not only need he not consult with the council if he does not think it practicable to do so, but he can avoid doing so if for any other reason he deems it unnecessary to consult. He need not do so because of these pernicious words, "or, otherwise." This sort of language dates back to the Norman conquerors.

Mr. Aiken: The Normans have landed.

Mr. Nielsen: I am told that the Normans have landed. He further confuses the issue by saying that if he wants to consult he may determine whether he will do so by writing a letter, by telephone, by sending a carrier pigeon, by sending somebody on a skidoo, or by using any other form of communication that is as slow as he may wish, at his own discretion. That is what is suggested by the amendment. It says in part, "after consultation with each of the members of the Council with whom consultation can then be effected."

I can understand the spirit of this amendment applying in the Northwest Territories, because it is difficult in an area covering 1,300,000 square miles, to get in touch with people. But there is absolutely no difficulty in the Yukon, where every community is served by telephone or radio telephone, and where most communities are served by road or air. There is no difficulty in getting members of the Yukon council together on twenty-four hours' notice. It has been done before and can be done again. So, when the minister says in his innocent fashion that he is only attempting to clarify the word "consultation", I say to him, "hogwash", sir. That is precisely what it is. What he has done with this amendment, which was passed unanimously by the committee, is so to constrict it with excessive verbiage and stifling conditions as to make it completely inoperative.

He talked about oil spills. Oil spills have nothing to do with this amendment of the minister. They might have something to do with the Territorial Lands Act amendment when we get to it. Clarify, indeed! Call individual members of council! I remember a former Prime Minister of the same political