

Northwest Territories Act

placed on the order paper and answers will be given is scarcely a reply to the suggestion that there should be a full inquiry by a committee of this house. If that was the general attitude of the government, then of course that is what could have been done with the printing bureau last year. As far as the government referring things to committees of this house is concerned, it is a very common practice for reports to be referred to committees of this house. It has been the practice for many years for the Minister of Trade and Commerce to refer to the agricultural committee the annual report of the Canadian wheat board. It is just as desirable, in fact it is more than desirable, that the whole question of the reports and the conduct of the seaway authority, particularly in light of the accusations made by members on the government side of the house, should be referred at this session to the public accounts committee.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Chairman, I will simply answer once again that if the public accounts committee should decide they would like to examine the St. Lawrence seaway authority they will receive every co-operation from me as the minister responsible.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, before the resolution passes there is one question I would like to ask the minister. I was absent most of the day and if it was asked in my absence and answered I apologize to the minister. The minister has been responsible for the St. Lawrence seaway authority for pretty close to 20 months now, which is the best part of two years; for some of us, two rather long years. I have just one simple question to ask, and it is this. After the hon. minister's period of association with the seaway authority is he satisfied in his own mind, before we give authority to borrow this huge additional sum, with the efficiency of the seaway authority?

Mr. Hees: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Resolution reported and concurred in.

Mr. Hees thereupon moved for leave to introduce Bill C-25 to amend the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ACT

AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE APPOINTMENT OF
JUDICIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE
OFFICERS, ETC.

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources) moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolutions:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Northwest Territories Act to provide for the appointment by the governor in council of judicial as well as of administrative officers; and to provide further for certain changes in connection with the administration of the act.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Rea in the chair.

Some hon. Members: Explain.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): Mr. Chairman, the resolution before the committee at this time is very similar to the resolution put forward last session dealing with the Yukon Act. In this particular resolution we are taking the first steps to amend the Northwest Territories Act in line with our policy of moving step by step to keep the judicial system in the Northwest Territories moving forward to meet the changing conditions in the north. This is particularly true with regard to the progress being made toward the more and more democratic carrying out of local government activities in the territories.

This particular series of amendments—there are five in all—deals mainly with administrative matters. There is one which deals with the appointment of legislative administrative and judicial officials, as was the case in the amendment to the Yukon Act last year. The balance of the amendments may seem to be very minor in character but, as hon. members know, such matters often mean a great deal to the councillors in the north and to the people of the territory. Of the five amendments two deal with the meetings of the council and the change in the stature of tenure of members of the council. One deals with judicial offices, another with the importation of liquor and the fifth with archeological sites. I believe that is sufficient to explain the purpose of the resolution before the committee tonight.

Mr. Hardie: Mr. Chairman, I do not believe we know much more now than we did a few moments ago before the minister rose to explain this resolution. Nevertheless I would say that we on this side of the house naturally welcome any changes in the act which would provide more effectively for the welfare of the people of the north. The minister said something was going to be done with regard to meetings of the council and I suppose—or at least I hope—that the amendments will cover the possibility of holding by-elections in the Northwest Territories in the event that a member of the council should die while in office or resign for some other reason. If this is the case, I wish to commend the minister for having taken a step forward. As hon. members of the committee know, I was one of the first elected representatives to sit on the Northwest Territories council and