

Northwest Territories Act

more clearly. Supposing we had put in "dissolve on the advice of the commissioner, on the recommendation of the council", what would that mean? It would mean the five appointees of the federal government and the commissioner would be given the power to recommend dissolution. Supposing that there were a quarrel, which has never happened to date, between the elected members and the appointed members appointed by the federal government for the period of the duration of the office. How could we best, first of all, move toward the provincial pattern, and secondly, set the stage so that eventually when we have a resident commissioner and a majority of elected members, and finally all elected members, they could move smoothly into the new democratic position?

On the surface it would look more democratic to say, as was suggested, the commissioner on the recommendation of council; but in actual practice if we wanted to protect the elected members we would not give this power to the majority of council. Therefore, what we have done is to keep that power in the hands of the governor in council at this stage, so that if there is a difference between the elected members and the appointed members—and remember that the appointed members in the commission are in the majority—knowing our feelings on this thing we could move in and protect their wishes. If they wanted dissolution and they expressed it in a divided council, then we have the power to give them that dissolution. If they opposed dissolution, even though the appointed members wanted it, we can look at their advice.

Now, quite frankly, this is not a subject on which to be dogmatic, but it looked to me, after I listened to all the discussions and the points raised by the hon. member for Mackenzie River and again by the hon. member for Kootenay West, that considering all those things this seemed to be closer to what we wanted to do, and that is to make sure that the interests of the elected members would be paramount. I quite candidly confess we wondered if we could not move the elected members up to five and give them a majority, and cut down the appointed members, but at the present time the feeling of the members of the council is that they are not in favour of extending the number of elected members to this degree. So that with the situation as it is, and with their answers expressed to us as they are, this is the solution which we reached.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is a complete answer to that point. It sounds a little irrational but that is the explanation.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the house went into committee thereon, Mr. Rea in the chair.

On clause 1—*Duration of council; elections*

Mr. Hardie: I thank the hon. minister for his explanation, but he still has not sold me on this proposition that the present wording of this bill is a step toward more democratic operation of the council. I still feel, as the hon. minister said, that if we were to change the words "governor in council" to "commissioner in council" in clause 1, it would do exactly what the minister said it would do a moment ago. It would at least give the elected members of that council the opportunity to discuss dissolution, but under this amendment the question would not be considered by the council at all. The cabinet could decide, as I said, that because they did not like the colour of somebody's eyes who had been elected they would dissolve the council without considering the council or placing this proposition before the council. For that reason I would like to move an amendment to clause 1 of the bill as follows:

That clause 1 of the bill be amended by deleting the words "governor in council" in the eleventh line thereof and by substituting therefor the words "commissioner in council".

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): I am sorry but I will have to oppose this amendment. I grant that it looks more democratic, but in practice it is the opposite, because it gives the power to the appointed members and the commissioner, without reference to the cabinet, to dissolve, and I think we should keep the power of dissolution in the hands of the democratic elected representatives of the people.

Amendment negatived: Yeas, 11; nays, 51.

The Deputy Chairman: I declare the amendment lost. Shall clause 1 carry?

Mr. Chevrier: May I call it ten o'clock?

Progress reported.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the house leader what the business is for tomorrow?

Mr. Green: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we shall continue with this debate on Bill C-26, an act to amend the Northwest Territories Act; we will then take item No. 4 on today's order paper, an act to amend the National Defence Act; item No. 2, an act to amend the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act; item No. 5, an act to amend the National Housing Act; item No. 9, the resolution concerning the appointment of parliamentary secretaries; item No. 7,