

Yukon Minerals Act

cally, it is that we should reserve our judgment on this question until the committee has had a full opportunity of listening to the pros and cons as they are put before us by the various interested witnesses. In saying that, I am not being directly critical of the hon. member for Yukon for having proposed the amendment, because as we all know he has a very special knowledge of and relationship to the situation in the part of Canada that he personally represents. We want to weigh the evidence that will be placed before the committee before making up our minds whether or not the provisions contained in this legislation are good, bad or indifferent. Then, based on that we may or may not wish to propose amendments to the committee.

From my own experience in the province of British Columbia, I would say that the era of the free-wheeling miner of the days of the gold rushes of the 1860's and of 1898 in the Yukon is all too often perpetuated beyond its time. As an elected representative of the people of Canada, I believe the time has come when we should sprinkle a little salt on some of the representations made by the mining interests. My colleague from Kootenay West has already made clear that large mining corporations today, in many cases multi-national corporations or corporations that are almost completely controlled in one way or another, principally by our neighbouring country, are asking us as legislators to accept attitudes that were taken in the days when it was man against man in the search for gold nuggets or the mother lode. Certainly, I feel this is something to which we should not agree.

This is one of the facts of life that the hon. member for Yukon and the people of the Yukon must recognize. By and large, the Yukon has been a relatively isolated mining community, but one of our constitutional responsibilities at the present time is to point out to the people of the Yukon that they are part of Canada, that the concepts that are applicable in other jurisdictions should also be applicable in the Yukon. I well realize, of course, that my basic philosophy in regard to the jurisdiction and ownership of natural resources is very different from that of my friend from the Yukon. As far as I am concerned, let me say at once that our natural resources, particularly the non-renewable resources, whether in the Yukon or in British Columbia, in Quebec or in Labrador, should more and more be regarded as the property of all the people of Canada, not only of those living in Canada at this particular time but the property and heritage of future generations.

Mr. Nielsen: Would the hon. gentleman permit a question?

Mr. Barnett: Yes.

Mr. Nielsen: If the hon. member believes in that philosophy, does he advocate that the resource jurisdiction now held by the provinces be returned to the federal authority?

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Speaker, I have no dogmatic answer to that question, but I will say that personally I think if we are going to have a truly rational use and exploita-

tion of our resources, this is one question that should be considered in relation to the development of a new constitutional arrangement within confederation. As a matter of fact, I think in many ways this is a much more basic consideration than some of the aspects of constitutional jurisdiction and possible constitutional amendments that I have heard debated at length. We have to devise some methods which will not centralize the administration in one spot in the country. We must give greater recognition to the concept that these resources are a national heritage which we, as Canadians, hold in trust for some of the people who live in other parts of the world. I say this in response to the question asked by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), but without particular reference to the Yukon Territory or its aspirations to move more rapidly toward full provincial status.

• (4:20 p.m.)

I make these remarks as a result of having lived in the Province of British Columbia since 1952, where we have witnessed the never waning ambitions toward parochialism displayed by the government of that province. I should like to make it quite clear to the hon. member for Yukon that I am basing these remarks very much on my observations of what has been going on in my own province, and in many cases this has been contrary to long-term national interests of Canada. Without going into this, let me say in passing that one of the prime examples is the attitude displayed in respect of the development of the resources of the Columbia River. The attitude shown by a former Liberal administration of Canada was one of a willingness to acquiesce too readily. However, I am straying from the subject matter of the Yukon minerals bill. I shall try to relate my remarks more directly to that matter.

As I said earlier, the hon. member for Kootenay West talked about our belief in protecting our ecology. He also expressed his interest and concern about the lack of opportunity for the native population to participate in mining activities in that part of Canada. Let me relate some of my remarks to the Canadian native population, not directly in that area of employment by mining corporations of Indian people but more in respect of their basic rights to the lands of the territory.

Let me say at once that this question is not restricted to the Yukon Territory alone. This is a question about which I have a basic difference of opinion, particularly in relation to the policy which has been announced by this government. In response to a question in the House not long ago, the minister expressed the view that all of the lands in the territories belong to the Crown, except those which have been specifically alienated. He said this was the basis of jurisdiction in the territories and to a large extent in British Columbia. In the territories there are not reserve lands set aside. The position of the government is that the Indians, Métis and Eskimos do not even have squatters' rights in the land in which their forefathers have lived since time immemorial. This attitude is carried forward in this bill. I might say that had the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) not been preoccupied he intended to deal with this aspect of the matter.

[Mr. Barnett.]