

Northwest Territories Act

would seem to me that one of the areas of exclusive jurisdiction in so far as the territories are concerned would be with regard to elections of council, elections of municipal governments and bodies contained therein, the determination of the right to vote and qualifications in this respect, within the bounds that there should not be any restrictions based upon race, colour or creed, which is an understood provision in the Canada Elections Act. This area of political freedom and the right of people to choose their own representatives should, I think, be one for the exclusive determination of the territories themselves.

● (9:00 p.m.)

The machinery of elections and the like should be theirs, and not that of the federal government; because one of the bases of democracy is political freedom and the right of people to elect their own representatives to boards, agencies and governments which are going to legislate over them. There is another area that I think is pretty fundamental to the full development of the territories—again, this is only my own thought—and this is the basic question of the effective control of education, which is now a superimposed matter. I believe this might be a proper area for the exclusive jurisdiction of the territories to legislate curricula and the like, in so far as education is concerned, because, first, education is the basis of understanding and, second, because the jurisdictional right of education is enshrined within the purview of the provincial governments at the present time, and is likely to remain there. When the territories get to the stage of becoming a province this will be one of their prime responsibilities, in any event.

There is an interesting part here about the degree to which education should be developed, perhaps to an extent which we in Ottawa cannot comprehend or to an extent perhaps that the government cannot comprehend. One of the statements in the reference paper for the advisory commission on the development of government in the Northwest Territories states that language plays a key role in creating opportunities to realize potential. This refers to people in the territories. It also states that in the 1961 census it was revealed that out of a total Indian and Eskimo population of 13,233, only slightly more than 5,000, or a little more than one-third of the native Indian and Eskimo population of the territories, had a good

[Mr. Howard.]

working knowledge of English. Conversely, almost two-thirds of the population did not have a good working knowledge of English. I submit that in this educational matter there must be the right of people in the Northwest Territories to determine the form which their education is going to take in order that people may be conversant one with the other. This may involve extensive courses, not exclusively of the English language or the French language, but extensive courses in the ability to understand the language the Aleutian people use, the Eskimos, and others, in order that the development of a basis for understanding and communication can come about as quickly as possible. I submit this is one of the several reasons why education might be one of the fundamental questions carved out for the exclusive jurisdiction of any territorial government.

Other matters such as health and welfare which are the basis of a full, happy and healthful life, are subjects which have for some years been neglected in the territories. For instance, the disease of tuberculosis is higher than anywhere else in Canada; infant mortality is higher; life expectancy is lower. The older people in the territories have more difficulty in finding employment and maintaining body and soul.

I believe these are matters which the government in the territories could probably administer to a far better extent than could an absentee landlord or an absentee government in Ottawa. I believe the matter of industry, employment and development of industry should rest in the hands of the territorial government, because this is the basis for social security. The statistics with respect to income in the territories, as indicated in the government document to which I referred earlier, are absolutely shocking by any standards. While we cannot feel emotionally about statistics, if we think in terms of these as related to people, we will come to some understanding of the difficulties confronting the people in the territories. The per capita personal cash income by ethnic groups in the Northwest Territories in 1963 with respect to Indians was a little more than \$500 per year, in comparison to less than \$500 per year for Eskimos. This document gives another designation which I do not like to an ethnic group. I will refrain from using the word because I think it should not be used in a publication of this sort. However, the document has a designation of "white".