

*Supply—Northern Affairs*

be very detrimental to the operation of good government in the territories. After all, the government here is the government of the territories. There are no representatives of local government in these areas. The real administrator is this government, and I think this could be used in a detrimental way.

**Mr. Coates:** Mr. Chairman—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

**Mr. Coates:** Mr. Chairman, I am concerned about the minister coming into this house at midnight and making statements of the kind he has made. When did he learn of these facts—at ten minutes to midnight? Did he feel at that time that he had to come down and give these facts to this committee? When was this information brought to his attention and how long has he been carrying it as a great burden on his soul, keeping it from this house?

**Mr. Howard:** As I said earlier, Mr. Chairman, and I will repeat it again, the operations of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources in the territories is closely allied with the operations carried out in the Soviet union. This involves a communal system in which the state is all powerful, with crushing oppressiveness, and this is the same whether it operates in Canada or the Soviet union. As long as the rules are the same, the results are the same.

The minister enunciated a correct doctrine which applies under our form of government, when he said that the minister must accept responsibility for what takes place within a department under his jurisdiction. We agree with that doctrine. Sometimes there are ministers who are incompetent, or incapable of knowing what does take place, or incapable of accepting responsibility. I do not include the present minister of northern affairs in that category.

Once the minister of northern affairs declares that he is going to accept this responsibility, with which we all agree, or has an obligation to accept this responsibility, there are several results and obligations. The minister has to either accept responsibility for what occurs in his department and correct the abuses, or fire the officials who are responsible for the abuses. In the alternative he must resign. He cannot simply stand up and say that he believes that he should accept responsibility for what has occurred. It is not good enough for him just to make a simple declaration of that kind, unless he is prepared to back it up with some action.

Anyone who has a remote understanding of what has occurred within the department of northern affairs, and the hon. member for Timiskaming only mentioned one or two things which had come to his attention as a result of a film made about a specific area of the territories, knows that there are abuses as a result of incompetent officials, and knows that there are officials who have not even a vague idea of what is taking place, but who try to operate from the sanctity of their offices here in Ottawa. These officials try to transmit their dreams or visions, as they were called at one time, into reality in the north, but they usually turn into nightmares for the people who live there.

I hope the minister will follow through and take his responsibility seriously, and will present evidence to this house at some subsequent date, perhaps during our consideration of the main estimates, to show that he has accepted his responsibility seriously, with the result that these abuses have been terminated by the removal of those individuals who have been responsible or delinquent. If he is not able to do this he should tender his resignation.

There is a motion now on the order paper in respect of a procedure and rules committee which, if passed, will change the committee structure. I hope one of the first items referred to an appropriate committee will be the estimates of the minister's department, so that there may be a complete and thorough examination of its operation at which time we will be able to ferret out those things which have been kept under cover and hidden for so long.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Mr. Chairman, I did not intend to speak during the consideration of these supplementary estimates, but having listened to the debate that has taken place, I now want to be very sure that I understood correctly what the minister has said. Has the minister made the charge that there was over \$600,000 worth of goods in warehouses at Frobisher which was placed there during the period I was the minister which has now been wasted? Was the figure \$600,000, as he inferred or the \$50,000 in this estimate, or just what is the figure?

**Mr. Laing:** Mr. Chairman, of course the hon. member knows that I did not say there was \$600,000 worth of material wasted at Frobisher Bay.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.