

*The Territories*

for Yukon could advise the House in this regard so that, I am quite confident we will, we can better understand the scope and effects of the proposal and, therefore, have a clearer idea of what its results will be.

May I be allowed to review the resolutions I defined, in the light of the national objective of the government for the north, and the legislation passed by Parliament and put into force by the government, in order to take stock of the progress accomplished in terms of the objectives of the proposal.

Hon. members will certainly recall that a former Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) who is now President of the Treasury Board had defined the government's national objectives for the north, the priorities for northern development and a plan of action for the 70's when he appeared before the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development on March 28, 1972. The minister said this, which I quote:

The statement is not a detailed blueprint for the future, nor an attempt to cover all areas of northern policy. It is in no sense a White Paper, a "grand design" or a rigid 10-year plan. It is not an announcement of brand new policy in the North. It has been anticipated in ministerial statements on numerous occasions, in speeches in the North and at many conferences—wherever northern policy was being discussed. It is a consolidation and an explication of recent policy decisions and orientations. It is a comprehensive and coherent presentation of what the government seeks to achieve in the Northern Territories, showing how the government intends to deal with opportunities and problems arising there.

The statement presents a flexible framework of policy guidance for government plans and operations in the north—those of federal departments and agencies and both territorial governments. For the first time, the Canadian people can see clearly the nature of the government's approach to northern development and the future direction of Canada's policy in the north.

With its approach based on evolution the government indeed answered the main part of the territorial councils' resolutions to the largest extent possible. During recent years, significant changes took place in both territories. The increasing rate of oil and gas operations and the growing awareness of the natives who became interested in the role they may play in northern development, partly contributed to emphasize the value of the north. To this are added the factors related to geographical situation, population, basis of taxation, economic growth and experience in managing the territories, which all relate to the realization of the objectives of political and constitutional autonomy. The Yukon and the Northwest Territories stretch over wide expanses but harbour relatively few people.

Thus, the Yukon covers 207,076 square miles and has a population of about 20,000; the Northwest Territories cover 1,304,903 square miles and have a population of about 38,000.

Fiscal revenue is low compared with general territory expenditures and, until now, the total economic growth has been limited. For instance, Mr. Speaker, I note that in 1975-76, the fiscal revenue of the Yukon, including revenue from all sources and an income tax replacement subsidy, totalled 64.8 per cent of the global territory expenditures. In the Northwest Territories, where fiscal revenue is low compared with general expenditures, the corresponding figure was 33.5 per cent. The federal government must cover the rest of these expenditures. Following a resolution passed March 17, 1976 by the Yukon Council in favor of a

territorial income tax, negotiations on the subject are going on between federal and territorial officials. All this emphasizes the need to act cautiously in granting political and constitutional autonomy to both territories.

However, Mr. Speaker, enormous progress has been accomplished these last few years. All the members of both territorial councils are elected by general elections. This has been the situation in the Yukon since 1908, Mr. Speaker, and in the Northwest Territories, since Bill C-8 was passed in 1974. The provisions of this bill has granted the wishes of the Yukon Council to increase to eleven the number of its members—the proposed increase was from seven to twelve—and gave the councils the right to set the number of their members in the future. An executive committee responsible for advising commissioners in their duties has been established in both territories. These committees include members of both councils, appointed and recalled by commissioners on the recommendations of the councils.

The Yukon Executive Committee was formed in 1970 while that of the Northwest Territories was formed only in 1975. I also note that both territorial councils have been authorized to set themselves the amount of their indemnities and allowances under certain amendments brought in in 1970 by the Act to amend the Yukon Act and the Northwest Territories Act.

Mr. Speaker, under motions No. 40, 1966, No. 1, 1968 and No. 28, 1972, the Yukon asked the minister then responsible for the administration of the Yukon to increase the membership of the Council, to appoint an executive committee, to put under members of the council the administration of territorial departments, to delegate to the council jurisdiction which would allow it to establish its own indemnities and allowances, to increase to 12 the membership of the council and to assign a third member to the executive committee. These changes have been achieved within the government policy which is intended to promote the constitutional and political development of the Yukon, which I mentioned earlier.

I said also that the Yukon has been electing a council for a number of years already. Progress towards a responsible government began in 1970. The expansion of the council and the appointment of a third member to the executive committee will contribute, I am sure, to the achievement of a responsible government.

But any higher objective at this point would extrapolate on the facts in respect of the territory's financial and population situation. Fully responsible government is to all practical purpose tantamount to government of a territory with provincial status. Such government would no doubt involve resource administration, which would of necessity add to the financial burden. I have serious doubts, as certainly does the hon. member opposite, whether the Canadian government can now grant fully responsible government while retaining responsibility for Yukon's viability.

The cabinet would act in an irresponsible way if they took such a position. It is the hope of the government, and hopefully that of the Yukon people, that when territory administration becomes fully responsible, it will be self-sufficient and will not have to constantly come to Ottawa to beg for funds.