

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, because this bill vitally affects the two northern territories in the establishment of one park in the Yukon and two parks in the Northwest Territories, I choose to speak this evening. I draw the attention of the members of the House to the fact that all afternoon and evening the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development has been considering Bill C-9, which is the principal reason that I and many other members who have been attending those committee sessions have been unable to participate in this debate. This is one more reason why standing committees should not be sitting while the House is sitting, particularly when the subject matter of a bill such as the one presently before the House conflicts directly with a kindred subject matter in a standing committee. There is no way members can split themselves into many different parts and attend to matters that vitally affect their constituencies, when this kind of programming occurs.

The first matter I want to deal with relates to the number of representations that have been received by members of the standing committee, and I presume by members of the House, from conservation and environmental organizations respecting the stance that this party took on the amendment that in committee stood in the name of the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett), requiring that before the establishment of any park occurred in the two northern territories, the approval of each of the two northern councils had to be sought.

● (2140)

Clause 2 of the bill makes it mandatory for the government not simply to seek the approval of but to seek the formal agreement of the provincial governments before any park is established or any boundaries are set. We in the two northern territories took the position that simple consultation was not enough. In 1970 when the Yukon Act was amended, the standing committee, when dealing with a provision which enabled the governor in council to dissolve the councils of the two territories prior to the expiration of the full term of four years, introduced an amendment which changed the situation of the governor in council consulting the two councils before such dissolution. Even that was distorted because the standing committee report to the House, and I can quote it almost precisely, said "where such consultation is deemed necessary or advisable". That kind of weasling wording means nothing. Now when we see a phrase such as that in clause 11 which obliges the governor in council to consult, we know it does not oblige the governor in council to do anything, such as seeking a formal agreement, so that the parks may be established in the north or altered after this so-called "consultation with".

The hon. member for Comox-Alberni and his colleagues in the committee quite rightly supported the position we took that that was not enough because it did not oblige the government to do anything of a concrete nature. What does consultation mean to this government? Surely my friends to the left have sufficient experience with the phrase "participatory democracy" as it was mouthed in 1968 to know that that kind of language means nothing. Surely they know that that kind of phrase is meaningless. The Indian people across this country have had enough experience, as a result of this participatory democracy, to

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realize that a phrase such as "after consultation with" means that there is a decision by the government and then they are told what the decision is. That is the process of consultation! It is in effect a fait accompli. The phrase "after consultation with" does not mean a damn thing.

Therefore, the hon. member for Comox-Alberni, his colleagues and members of this party on the standing committee, realizing the failure of the government to go through this process of consultation, decided to put some teeth into this bill. We deleted the phrase "after consultation with" and required the government to seek the approval of the elected representatives of the people in our two northern territories.

That brings me to another point and I will deal with the somersault of the hon. member for Comox-Alberni. I am greatly disappointed by the completeness with which that hon. member is able to swallow himself on many occasions.

Mr. Baker: He would rather switch than fight.

Mr. Nielsen: He was a strong advocate of the views of the committee that Canadians above the sixtieth parallel should be on an equal basis with Canadians below the sixtieth parallel. But now he has made a complete turn-about, going along with the government in order to get his own amendment accepted. He has been able to swallow himself in respect of that principle which he supported in the committee.

Mr. Baker: Sold out for a mess of potage.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the hon. member just what he has in mind in respect of the rights of the Indians and whether it is important to protect their rights, in view of the fact that the Yukon council has already indicated its approval for the establishment of the park.

Mr. Nielsen: That has nothing to do with it. The hon. member for Comox-Alberni and the minister can drag red herrings back and forth across the trail as often as they please, but they cannot justify what the hon. member has done in reversing himself in respect of protecting these rights. Both he and the minister know that when the committee visited Whitehorse an amendment was introduced that protected these native rights which the minister has omitted from the bill, and that amendment was accepted unanimously by the committee.

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I think the record should be set straight in that regard. Before we introduced the bill in the House we had the wisdom to seek the opinion of the elected members of the council of the Yukon, who voted in favour of the bill. The hon. member is now attempting to catch up after history has already been written.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I would suggest that these remarks are more in the form of debate than a question of privilege.

Mr. Barnett: While I recognize the situation the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) described when he began to speak, and I sympathize with his frustration in trying