

He said: Mr. Speaker, I hope this amendment will find acceptance. Perhaps upon reflection the minister might agree with me that consideration of the question of a quorum was omitted as a result of an oversight when the bill was drafted. Under the existing legislation the commission consists of three members and a quorum is two. The bill before us increases the number serving on the commission from three to five and omits the clause in the present act with respect to a quorum. We must therefore rely on a provision in the Interpretation Act which leaves us with a quorum of three.

When this bill passes the Board will consist of five members of whom two will be appointed, one from each of the territories, that is, from the Yukon and from the Northwest Territories. The other three will be government members. The practice could develop—I am not suggesting for a moment that it will be followed—of holding a meeting without any notice being given to either of the two territorial representatives on the commission. It would be a simple matter for the chairman to call the other two government members together and make decisions in the absence of the territorial members.

An hon. Member: In the absence of a quorum?

Mr. Nielsen: No. The quorum, under the terms of the Interpretation Act, is three. Once this bill goes through, the quorum being three out of five, there is a possibility that the commission could meet and reach decisions and that the members from the Yukon and the Northwest Territories would be left out entirely. My amendment proposes that—

A quorum shall not be properly constituted and shall not conduct business unless four days clear notice of the meeting has been given to each member of the Commission at his ordinary place of residence.

I have said “four days” in the amendment but I am certainly not wedded to four days. In the Yukon there is no problem. However, in the Northwest Territories, as I am sure the hon. member for the Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth) will agree if he is following the debate, an appointed member could live so far away from the place at which a meeting is to be held that it might take four days for a communication to reach him. As I say, I am not suggesting for a moment that the practice will develop under which these meetings will be confined to government members. However, the fact that the door is wide open for such an abuse adds weight to the argument in favour of the amendment I propose.

It might be asserted—and I say this in anticipation of what the minister might tell us in his reply—that there are really three territorial members on the board now because he has recently appointed the Commissioner of the Yukon as Chairman of the Board. But with all due respect to the Commissioner of the Yukon Territory, for some six years now he has been an employee of the government and, again with all due respect to the Commissioner, I might say he has learned very well how to take his instructions from time to time from the minister, and I am certain that this loyalty will follow him into his new position as Chairman of the Power Commission.

Again, with no disrespect to the Commissioner, I say he does have a civil servant's loyalty to the minister, as he should have; he will take instructions from the minister,

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as he should do, just as if he had been a career civil servant for the last 30 years. So I classify him as a government member of the commission, *simon-pure*. He, together with the two government members, will leave the territories in a minority position.

All I ask is an assurance that all the members of the commission, when its numbers have been extended to five, will be given notice of all the meetings to be held by the commission—a guarantee that the appointed members from each of the territories will attend and take part in the decision-making process. After all, it would be an empty gesture to expand the commission, purporting to include territorial input, and then be able so easily to subvert that laudable intention by having the commission hold its meetings with a quorum of three, as would be allowed under the Interpretation Act, without notifying the other two members of the Commission. This practice could be followed, and it is in order to avert such a danger that I am putting forward this amendment.

The minister could cut debate very short if he would indicate at the outset his intention to accept the amendment. It is one which would entail no expenditure from the public purse. It would cost the government nothing in the way of administrative expenditures, and it would endorse the stated intention of the government to involve the two territories in a meaningful way in the decision-making process. If the minister is about to arise to accept the amendment I will stop right now.

Mrs. Campagnolo: No way.

Mr. Nielsen: I do not see the hon. gentleman rising, and the parliamentary secretary to the minister says “no way”. I find this rather a pity, because it means in essence that what I fear is exactly the case. The minister and his parliamentary secretary, who appear to be of a single mind, are in effect saying that this business of adding additional members from the Yukon and the Northwest Territories is mere window dressing.

● (1540)

If this amendment does not pass we are not going to destroy the feature of enabling the three government members to hold meetings by themselves and make decisions on their own without there being any input from the two appointed members. It is sheer hypocrisy and sham for the government to be taking such a posture and rejecting a reasonable amendment like this which would ensure that at least the opportunity is given to the two territorial appointees to participate in all commission decisions.

The amendment is not asking for a change in the quorum; it is not asking that the quorum be increased beyond three. It is not asking that the two territorial representatives must be present. All the amendment is asking is that the two territorial representatives, as well as the other members of the commission, be given notice of a meeting, and I cannot for the life of me see what the government finds unreasonable about this kind of amendment.

I see the minister is conferring with a colleague, and perhaps after a second, careful reading of the amendment he will find this reasonableness in its content. Perhaps it