

people in the Yukon Territory as well as those people from abroad who have invested their resources, time and aspirations in the development of this great region. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the kind of treatment which this proposed bill would mete out to the people of the Yukon Territory illustrates clearly the need for this House to consider at a very early date whether the time is opportune to confer upon the Yukon territory and MacKenzie territory the sovereign status of provinces. I believe that provincial status for both the Yukon and MacKenzie territories would benefit our citizens now living there, eliminate some important difficulties which they are now experiencing and, as well, prove to be a measure with broad popular support.

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding) has covered the greater part of the position of the New Democratic Party with regard to the bill before us, not only in the remarks he made today but in the previous segment of his speech on March 5. I do not intend to attempt to cover all of the ground that he did in the two parts of his speech. However, I propose to underline one or two aspects of the bill which he discussed.

The minister will recall that a good portion of the hon. member's speech was devoted to the question of the need for ecological protection in the Yukon territory. He emphasized the fact that we are still in the dark as to what the government has in mind in this connection and made particular reference to the action of Parliament last year in making some amendments to the Territorial Lands Act. We still have not had the regulations under that act presented to us which we were assured would be drafted to give some substance to the amendments passed last year. The minister may have some valid reasons for the delay, but I remind him that he assured the standing committee, when we were considering that bill, that a draft of those regulations would be referred to that committee for consideration last fall. We are well into spring and, indeed, approaching summer, but we still have no detailed knowledge of what the minister has in mind.

I think I am correct in saying that the minister made some statements to the effect that discussions had been held with mining interests in connection with the proposed regulations for the areas in which they were interested in the Yukon, and that some understanding had been reached. There should be some understanding between the minister and the members of this chamber as to what is contained in the regulations. That kind of understanding and knowledge should have priority over any behind-the-scenes agreement with the mining interests.

Mr. Chrétien: It is not with the mining interests, it is with the territorial councillors.

Mr. Barnett: The minister made reference to the territorial council. I may be in error, but I recall him stating that some discussions had been held with the mining interests. I gained the impression that the minister was, in effect, telling us that the mining interests were satisfied with what the government had in mind.

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Mr. Chrétien: They will never be satisfied.

Mr. Barnett: Perhaps the interjection by the minister has put the situation in a more correct perspective. I remember being slightly puzzled at the time. I understood him to say that the mining interests had been easily and completely satisfied.

Mr. Nielsen: In no way.

Mr. Barnett: This brings to mind the fact that the Yukon is one of the more historic mining areas in Canada. It shares this position with the province from which I come. For quite a number of years I lived in a historic mining area of Canada which predates the Yukon, namely the Cariboo mining country of British Columbia. Anyone with that kind of background association, and who has lived in a mining camp area, can understand the minister's interjection about the mining interests never being completely satisfied.

● (4:10 p.m.)

In considering a bill of this kind, I think we should have in the background of our consideration the basic pattern that was set in the real pioneering days of the mining enterprise in this country. This pattern was started, at least in western parts, when man was lured to look for gold. In many respects this proposed law is repeating a basic concept of mining law that was designed to bring some semblance of order to the way in which individual prospectors and miners could utilize mining resources, at the same time avoiding a repetition in Canada of the law of the six-gun which one hears prevailed in the country to the south during the days of the California gold rush.

Mr. Nielsen: We have that order now in the existing act.

Mr. Barnett: In effect, Mr. Speaker, that is what I was saying. This law is a repetition of this basic concept that was built up in Canada and which goes back to the days when British Columbia was still a Crown colony under Governor Sir James Douglas, and Sir Matthew Begbie, our first chief justice, sometimes known as the "hanging judge", was keeping the boys in order in the mining camps of British Columbia. By this I mean that a large portion of this bill is taken up with the technicalities of how claims can be staked, where they can be recorded, how they can be recorded, and what has to be done in order that those who originally staked them can go ahead and exploit the mineral resources beneath the surface. I do not think any of us will quarrel with the need for the application of this basic concept of bringing in some rule of law to govern this particular type of activity. The question in relation to this bill is whether this is being done in a proper way or not.

I should remind the House, in view of the time lag since this bill was last discussed, that my colleague the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding) did indicate we were not prepared to support the amendment which actually is the subject matter of this present debate. I should like to restate our feeling on this. Basi-