

Northwest Territories Act

situation where we are taking that power away and giving it to the Commissioner, who is an appointee of the government and who must accept from time to time the instructions of the minister or the governor in council. So in the long run, if the minister or the governor in council does not want any particular money bill placed before the Northwest Territories Council it does not go before that council, and there is no right in the seven elected representatives of the people of the territories to alter that situation.

Mr. Laing: Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member permit a question? Could he tell us how this differs in any respect whatsoever from the severance of the executive power and the legislative power in the legislative assembly of any province?

Mr. Nielsen: This is precisely the principle involved here and the one involved in the Yukon Act which we will be considering in a moment. You have, if I may be permitted to use a colourful adjective, the invidious situation existing in both territories where the executive and the legislative functions are separated. There is no control exercised by the elected representatives of the people over the executive. Therein lies the difference between every provincial legislature and this one. The minister, as a member of the executive of this government, is responsible to the elected representatives of the people in this house. In the Northwest Territories and Yukon there is no responsibility by the executive to the representatives of the people. There is the difference; it is as simple as that.

Mr. Laing: Mr. Chairman, perhaps the hon. member would permit me to make this observation. This provision is included because they are not a province but we are hopefully moving toward that relationship. This is one of those interim situations along the road, if you like to call it such, toward coming to a position where I would hope some day they would have the same kind of government that we have in the provinces of Canada. But the difficulty is the small population in widely scattered areas and the necessity of having in the central government here an immense fund of money to make possible the laying of the groundwork out of which we hope to realize, for them and for us too, their participation as a province some day.

Mr. Nielsen: I agree with the minister's laudable objective but I cannot agree with his arguments in support of denying these rather

[Mr. Nielsen.]

fundamental principles of democracy to the people who live there. As I said yesterday, there can be no price-tag on democracy. There was just as small a population in 1869—indeed, it was smaller by several thousand—in the province of Manitoba when that province was carved out of the then Northwest Territories. That province, at the time it was created a province, was subsidized by federal funds probably as heavily as are the Northwest Territories today.

I implore the minister to accept that this is not an argument for saying to the people in the north: You are not responsible enough to spend not only your own money raised by taxing yourselves but our money which we contribute to the development, rightfully so, of the north.

Mr. Laing: Mr. Chairman, perhaps the hon. member would permit me to ask one more question and then I have to leave the chamber for a short while. Would he suggest that in the last three years we have made such great progress that these great, democratic, revolutionary changes can now be made whereas they were out of the question three and a half years ago? We have not developed that fast, though I keep claiming we are doing very well there. We are getting a considerable amount of new investment. I ask the hon. member, why was this not done three and a half years ago? I think we are increasing the tempo of development in the right direction, but I believe the hon. member would be the first to agree that all these changes and transitions cannot be made overnight.

Mr. Nielsen: I would be the first to agree with that, by all means. I feel a compulsion to answer the minister in the same vein as he has posed his question, but I have resolved that I am not going to become partisan over this business of the future political development of these two territories. Therefore I will not answer his question, but only for that reason. I could do so. Progress has been made and I am sure it will continue to be made. I am not advocating self-government overnight but I am advocating that we must embark now upon a blueprint, commencing with our centennial year, which will achieve that self-government within the foreseeable future.

It is a retrograde step to adopt this kind of amendment. If the minister sincerely believed in the principle of developing political institutions in the Northwest Territories he would not move from the position which now exists, whereby power is given to the legislative body in the Yukon to introduce money bills,