

in connection with fur farming. He knows what has happened in the last twenty-five years in connection with the development of silver foxes and, to a smaller degree, the production of fur bearing animals of lesser importance. Possibly in this category I might mention the weasel and the otter.

May I point to the minister that in the southern tip of James bay there are several islands which could be well adapted to fur farming. I know it is well known to hon. members in the committee that the majority of Indians living in that section of the country are not prosperous, for the reason I pointed out a few moments ago, namely that the white population has settled the lands and pushed back the Indians. They have been thrown back to the water fringe, and are being held there.

Perhaps the department has already done something; but if it has not, I would urge that the islands I have mentioned are well adapted to fur farming, and offer a wonderful opportunity for the Indians. Possibly some experiments could be conducted in order to ascertain whether or not fur farming could be carried on profitably at that point. In my opening observations I asked what yardstick would be used in deciding that which is or is not a mineral area.

Mr. CRERAR: Before a mine is discovered, prospecting has to be done. If someone obtains the right to prospect for minerals on an Indian reserve, he may find evidence of mineral deposits there. He then asks for the right to diamond drill it, or to sink a shaft, and, if he finds a mineral, to develop it. That is all provided for in the arrangements that are made with him before he starts operations at all. My hon. friend mentioned the matter of timber on the reserve which might be used for mining purposes. I cannot imagine anyone asking for the right to cut a few hundred thousand feet of timber on a reserve for mining purposes unless he had a use for the timber.

Mr. BRADETTE: I meant in the mining claims.

Mr. CRERAR: Well, the timber would be disposed of separately from the right to prospect. In any event this is all subject to the consent of the Indians.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: How is that consent obtained? What is the procedure?

Mr. CRERAR: The procedure is provided for in the Indian Act. It is by a meeting of the band called for the purpose. The matter is placed before them and they vote upon it

in the regular way. The procedure by which the consent of the Indian is secured for the disposal of grazing leases or hay claims or pulpwood or timber is set out very clearly in the Indian Act and the regulations that deal with the matter under the provisions of the act. There have been no cases within my knowledge where there has been complaint regarding the disposition of these resources, though there may be instances of which I am not aware.

Mr. STEVENS: I fully appreciate the difficulty of passing regulations that will adequately control the situation as it has been up to the present, and that difficulty will be greatly extended in connection with the proposals of this resolution regarding mining and so on. One of the weaknesses—and I think it is a very grave one—of the present regulations is exactly that to which the minister has now referred. A band of Indians is called together by the leader and then, under the supervision or advice and general direction of the Indian agent, a vote is taken. I am not reflecting unduly on the Indian when I say that very few Indians in these bands, particularly in the more remote districts, are competent to determine what possible future merit there may be in the alleged mineral resources on their property. I think it is something that is entirely beyond their power of comprehension except in rare cases, and even in the more simple processes such as a lease for grazing purposes, and so on, the Indian is very often singularly improvident in his decisions. He is by nature a person who likes to see something by way of money coming in to the band and is prone to surrender almost any right for some immediate and visible gain; and therefore, frankly, this proposal rather disturbs me. There is no doubt that there must be definite and serious government supervision, and by that I do not mean the ordinary supervision under the Indian Act as it exists at present. I mean that the government must act in the capacity of guardian, exercising that power and right in an extremely careful way.

Mr. CRERAR: That will be done.

Mr. STEVENS: I understand that the question has already been asked of the minister, whether he as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs claims on behalf of the Indians the proprietary right to minerals on Indian reserves?

Mr. CRERAR: I asked for a legal opinion from the officers of the crown.

Mr. STEVENS: That is a vital point. Before any decision is made to deal with or lease or handle these mineral rights in any