

Northern Canada Power Commission Act

The interest rate on money provided under the Atlantic Provinces Power Development Act was one-eighth of one per cent, which I think hon. members will agree was pretty generous on the part of the federal government of the day. A 40-year repayment period was provided for. I am not sure whether the NCPC still carries out this expanded function under the Atlantic Provinces Power Development Act. The point I want to make in referring to this development in 1958 is simply that it was obvious that the federal government was using NCPC to assist in power development in areas where private enterprise was not willing to undertake the risk involved, and in the undeveloped and isolated areas of Canada where public initiative was required.

It is not my intention, Mr. Speaker, to cover the same territory that was covered by both the hon. member for Yukon and the hon. member for Northwest Territories. As the members most familiar with the current situation, they have adequately covered the ground. As a former minister of this department, I strongly support the amendment that has been put forward by the hon. member for Yukon. As I have said, it is fundamental to the entire developmental pattern that has emerged in the past decade, particularly in the Yukon Territory and to the development, albeit on a smaller scale, of the Northwest Territories. The bill that the government has placed before Parliament will further discourage the movement of private investment into this great, undeveloped, geographic empire that has fallen to the government of Canada. There are 3.5 million square miles in the Northwest Territories alone.

● (5:20 p.m.)

I am sure that all ministers who have assumed responsibility for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development will agree that it has been difficult to interest private enterprise in the development of the potential in our northern territories. This is partly due to the rugged nature of the terrain, the difficulties of distance and expanse of the geography and, in some instances, to the approach of the government with respect to the role that private enterprise can play in the developing north.

The present minister made a recent trip to Europe in order to interest investment from private sources in that part of the world. When I was minister, I visited Japan. This was based on the continuing contact that we had with the then Japanese ambassador. I am speaking of the early 1960s. He displayed enthusiastic interest on behalf of his government in the investment opportunities of the Yukon Territory. Since that time projects such as the New Imperial Mines and the Anvil Mine have become operative much more quickly than would have been the case had the investment potential in Japan with regard to natural resources not become available to the Yukon Territory. I could mention other cases where private enterprisers, at great risk to themselves, moved in and developed projects. These are now producing dramatic results in terms of income, as outlined by the hon. member for Yukon.

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

Figures that the Carr report indicated would not be realized until 1975 have already been achieved. This is because Canada Tungsten, which produces a rare mineral in the space age, created an entire community based on this resource. Clinton Creek, which is close to the Alaska border, is another extremely important development which has been made possible by the interests of private investment in the Yukon Territory. The course the government is now taking under the bill now before the House reverses the encouraging trend that has been under way in the past decade. We have been endeavouring to minimize the natural impediments and difficulties to private investment. We have adopted a positive attitude by providing specific incentives so that private enterprise would be encouraged rather than discouraged.

As I said at the opening of my comments today, Mr. Speaker, I ask for the urgent consideration of the government with respect to the psychological implications of the amendments proposed with respect to the functions of the NCPC. Perhaps at this stage this applies more to the Yukon Territory than to the Northwest territories. In every way possible, the federal presence of Ottawa in the territories should be gradually diminishing. This revolves around the whole question of growing autonomy in the northern territories. In the early 1960s the Yukon Territory was moving ahead dramatically. This was largely on the basis of the assurance that they would be able to control more of their destiny with respect to administrative matters as well as with respect to resource development. The purport of the bill before us reverses this trend. It is bound to have a discouraging and negative effect on the impetus of northern development which has been achieved during the past decade.

The hon. member for Yukon has offered the solution for the dilemma which is obviously causing agonizing second thoughts for the hon. member for Northwest Territories. In his remarks this afternoon, he did everything except publicly repudiate the bill. Hon. members from both sides of the chamber must work together to review the principle of the bill. We normally would have had the opportunity to do this at the resolution stage, under the old rules. We must take an in-depth look at the whole trend of northern development, as recommended by the hon. member for Northwest Territories. We would then have before this House a bill of which the minister could be proud. Instead of ducking his responsibility of piloting the bill, he would be happy to come before the House of Commons. He could use the bill as a further source of information and propaganda—I use that word term in the best sense—in the interest of northern development.

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the debate this afternoon with a great deal of interest. I thoroughly enjoyed the remarks of the Parliamentary Secretary, of the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) and of the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange). They have given the members of this House a much better insight into the problems facing the northern areas of Canada.

It is not my intention to spend a great deal of time debating the various clauses of the bill now before us. I