

I hope that members of the party to my left, particularly the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth), will see fit to endorse this particular measure despite their long-term goals, otherwise they will be grossly discriminatory against and unfair to Canadians who reside in the two-fifths of Canada north of 60. The north deserves additional representation in the Parliament of Canada.

Hopefully, when redistribution of the make-up of this House takes place some arrangement will be made to compensate for the tremendous geographical distances which must be covered. One way in which the northern territories can be assured wider representation in the near future is by way of appointment to the Parliament of Canada.

Many northerners could bring to parliament additional expertise in the social, economic and cultural problems of the north. It would be beneficial to us all if we were exposed more frequently and fully to the views of northerners. Someone like the late Knut Lang would have made a singular contribution. There are many others who could contribute. There is always some debate as to the population figures north of 60. We know that many northern residents are native, that is, Indian, Metis and Inuit. Last year, when speaking to a similar bill in the House, I stated that I felt it would be particularly fitting if a representative of the native peoples could sit in the other place as a representative of one or both of the territories. The problems of these people of the north are many, and they deserve our attention and concern.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this bill will receive early implementation and that the appointment of two northerners to the other place will be carried out without delay.

Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this bill, but was somewhat surprised to hear the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) give credit to the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) for its underlying idea. It seems to me that it was considered in the joint Senate and House of Commons committee which looked at recommendations for constitutional change. I have spoken out in the House about the situation in the Senate and I will continue speaking out until such time as the situation changes.

I was happy to hear the remarks of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) regarding representation for the Northwest Territories. That, I think, is most important. In the last session I introduced bills which would have provided for more representation but certainly not for appointees. This afternoon we debated the bill which would abolish appointees to the Council of the Northwest Territories. This bill seems to be a step backward in that it provides for appointments to the Senate. I have very serious doubts whether any self-respecting northerner would accept the appointment of senator.

● (2020)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Firth: As a matter of fact, should this bill pass through the House and a northerner is appointed, it may be necessary to bring him here at gunpoint.

The Senate

The message I get from this bill with regard to further appointees seems to point to the fact that the Liberals have had some difficulty in electing members from the north. The situation seems to be: If we can't elect them, let's appoint them. We appoint members from the Northwest Territories administration to the information and liaison office in Ottawa. This costs more money than having another member. He does not have to do very much, but at least the government has him here. They want to appoint a chap from the Yukon who is not even able to win the nomination for the Liberal candidacy in the last election. They want to make another position and appoint him as a senator.

I repeat, I doubt very much whether any self-respecting northerner would accept that position. The fact is the Northwest Territories deserve more representation in this House. This bill is somewhat like a joke that is being played on the people of the Northwest Territories—and we do not think it is a very funny joke.

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, the fact that I caught you in the act of rising tells me that you are an incurable optimist. I welcome this bill. The hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth) referred to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) giving me credit for this idea, I think he called it. He left the inference with the House that the idea originated with the Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on the Constitution which travelled to other parts of the country as well as the Yukon and Northwest Territories. They held hearings in Dawson City, Whitehorse and Watson Lake. Let me say to him through you, Mr. Speaker, that many years before the joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons started sitting on the question of the constitution of Canada, this bill of mine had been introduced and debated. Perhaps it is because the hon. member for Northwest Territories did not read *Hansard*, or was not here at the time, that he fails to recognize the fact that I have on an almost annual basis introduced a bill which would make the two northern territories truly representative in the Parliament of Canada.

As I understand it, the Parliament of Canada consists of two Houses. In each of those Houses, this place and the other place, every part of Canada has representation. Until the minister's very worth while bill was introduced this evening, the only exception has been Canadians living above the sixtieth parallel. Canadians of white origin, Canadians of Indian origin and Canadians of Inuit origin are all Canadians. I quote the remarks made earlier today by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in another debate espousing the principle that all Canadians should be treated equally. It is not equality of treatment to have lack of representation in both Houses of parliament for all Canadians. It is that simple and that logical. My only regret is that the matter had to wait so long and we had to be in a minority situation before the government was brought to the realization that the proper approach would be representation in both Houses:

As the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands said, at one time the north was represented by one member of parliament. I ask members here this evening to consider the fact that one member represented some 1,700,000