

Yukon and N.W.T. Government

already been implemented in an unquestionable way, five others were partially implemented while four were rejected.

Some of my colleagues gave the reasons for that but I should like to deal at this stage with the advisability of establishing an executive committee in the Northwest Territories. Some of the Carrothers Commission's recommendations dealt with the establishment of an executive committee. It was not even suggested that the members of such an executive committee be elected.

I could perhaps answer the argument of the hon. member for Yukon by saying that the Carrothers Commission suggested that an executive council be set up for the Northwest Territories, but without specifying that its members should be elected.

A committee was formed. It is the only major recommendation made by the Carrothers Commission that was not implemented. In fact, a committee made up of the members of the legislative council of the Territories was formed. It recommended specifically to the federal government, that ad hoc committees be set up, instead of an executive committee, to study various problems and allow the elected members of the Territories to work more closely with the executive of the Territories.

We will comply immediately with the request of the elected representatives of the Territories by setting up a finance committee which will work in co-operation with the commissioner. However, we cannot accept the idea that the Northwest Territories are on the verge of becoming a province.

To my mind, it was only fair for the government to tell the citizens of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories what its views were, instead of keeping them in suspense for several months or years.

That is why I knew that some of my recommendations would not be very popular because for three or four years we have spoken of the Territories as near-provinces; then, they are bluntly told that it is not the case and that it will not be. It is quite normal, in such cases, to expect negative reactions.

And even then, the population would be insufficient, for that land, which includes nearly one third of the whole Canadian territory, has only 32,000 inhabitants. Most of them are Indians, Metis or Eskimos. Now, despite the election system that has been in force for many years in the Northwest Territories, up to now only one Eskimo has been elected to the Territorial Council; by the way, he supported the government when the policy

[Mr. Chrétien.]

was announced. Another Council member, of Indian origin, who was not elected since he was appointed by the government, represents also the majority of the Northwest Territories population, which endorses the government's stand.

The revenues that the Northwest Territories could get, at the provincial level, amount to \$19 million, as compared to current expenses of the order of \$92 million. These figures cover assistance of all kinds which the federal government could grant them and which is exactly the type of assistance given to Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and other low income provinces.

Only, it is a constitutional deficiency. Now the people of the territories know exactly where we stand. We have taken a new orientation towards a new democracy—

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the minister but his time has expired, unless there is unanimous consent that he continue.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: I wish to thank hon. members for their kindness.

Until now we have worked at establishing a government more adapted to the circumstances, and if all is not well in the Yukon and in the Northwest Territories, nothing will prevent us from changing it later. Right now, the residents of those regions know exactly where they stand and I think that at least we have clarified the situation.

The important thing is the total development of the Territories. It is also important that the development of northern Canada which represents 40 per cent of our country, be progressive and rational. We must not engage in fantasies but rather implement programs for the development of the North.

At the present time, there are some problems which we would like to solve quickly. During one of my trips to Prince George, in British Columbia, I had the opportunity to explain the government policy on conservation of natural resources and pollution in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

In my opinion, we now have in the territories the opportunity to undertake an economic and social development which will enable us to preserve the natural beauty of that area and to assure the rational development of resources without the confusion and pollution which exist in other parts of Canada.