

*Adjournment Debate*

should save the life of one innocent Canadian this year or next year, then it is worth while retaining.

● (2150)

In 1973 my predecessor, Mr. Ross Whicher, summed it up when he said that when any country begins to think more of the criminal than it does of the victim, then that country is indeed in a horrible state of affairs. That statement is as true now as it was then. I believe capital punishment should be reinstated in Canada for the criminal who has committed first degree murder beyond a shadow of a doubt. I believe it will make Canada a safer and better place in which to live, and I shall vote to that effect in the forthcoming division.

**Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** Mr. Speaker, as I look at the clock and see that it is five minutes to ten I wonder whether it would be in order to call it ten o'clock now.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Actually the Chair has no objection to asking if hon. members agree. I should like to make sure, however, before doing so that the hon. members who are interested in the adjournment debate, the hon. member for the Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth) and the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Friesen), are here.

Is it agreed that we call it ten o'clock?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

## PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

### NORTHERN AFFAIRS—ISSUANCE OF NEW PERMITS TO DRILL FOR OIL ON NATIVE LAND—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories):** Mr. Speaker, I have received this time tonight to deal with a matter I first raised in the House on April 7, and again on April 8. I realize the House has before it a great number of pressing matters and therefore I appreciate the opportunity to return to this matter.

At this time I should like to correct a slight mistake which appeared in *Hansard* when my question was recorded on April 7. I was not asking about oil exploration permits, as *Hansard* would have us believe. I was speaking of the 68 exploration permits that were issued to several companies to look for uranium in the Keewatin and Baffin regions of the Northwest Territories. These permits were issued on March 29 of this year. Although they themselves are important I suppose what is really at issue here is the attitude of the government when it issued the permits.

Time and time again I and many others have watched this particular minister and top officials of his staff act with almost total insensitivity toward the native people,

[Mr. Douglas (Bruce-Grey).]

their goals and their feelings. This matter of the uranium permits is just the latest in a long string of insensitive acts. I feel it is important to use this as an example of how this department and this minister carry out their duties both in respect of Indian affairs and northern development.

The other person who publicly complained about this incident was James Arvaluk, president of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. I want to say for the benefit of the parliamentary secretary who is assigned to answer me that both I and Mr. Arvaluk are well aware of the process of receiving permits for exploration work in the North. We are both aware that at some point down the road short public hearings will be held on the application of these companies to receive land use permits. However, that is not at issue. What is at issue here is the government's discourtesy in not forewarning the ITC that these permits were coming forward, and the inexcusable action of the minister in not even being aware that they had been issued.

Also for the benefit of the parliamentary secretary I should like to give some background of this incident. It began several years ago when the department authorized a sum of money to be given to the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada for research into the land claims of the Inuit. After four years of work the ITC presented to cabinet its proposal for the settlement of Inuit land claims in the Northwest Territories. From the remarks made at that meeting on February 28 of this year I, and other observers, thought both sides were willing to co-operate with each other and that the negotiations for the Inuit land claim were off to an amiable start.

The government received the ITC proposal and said it would study it. The government even asked for some meetings to clarify parts of the proposal. I understand that one of those meetings has already taken place. As I said, this tells me that the negotiations over the Inuit land claims have started. On March 29, a series of exploration permits were issued. These were permits to explore for uranium, and they are by no means singular. The government has been issuing these things wholesale for the past several years—permits to drill for oil and gas in the Beaufort Sea, permission to carry out seismic testing in Lancaster Sound, and so on. However, there is a difference now. All that land is the subject of land claims negotiations.

I and the ITC, as well as many others, view the act of granting permits of this kind without informing the ITC as nothing but an act of extreme bad faith.

On April 6 the ITC delivered a letter to the minister to outline their grievance which, I repeat, is serious. It is felt that the whole negotiation is in jeopardy. The next day when I asked my question in the House the minister was not even aware of the matter. There is no excuse for this. The land claims issue should be of utmost importance to this department. The people concerned seem to be too busy handing out exploration permits to care about this matter.

To add insult to injury, several days later the minister had the nerve to send a patronizing and highhanded letter to the ITC explaining the nitty-gritty details of how one should go about obtaining an exploration permit. The letter goes on to slap Mr. Arvaluk on the hand for making his letter public. I guess that is a high sin in a department that does all its work in secret.