

*Yukon and Territorial Lands Acts*

cerned. I am not arguing that point and would not presume to put my views in place of those of people who live in the territories. After all, they are affected. But surely some ground other than one involving colonial or provincial status could be agreed upon and could be a basis on which to found self-government of the territories. Surely there is some area wherein agreement is possible.

Surely there is a possibility of holding meetings and consultations with the people of the territories and their elected representatives, as well as those others on the council, to see whether under the constitution some mutually agreed upon power could be developed within the framework of the British North America Act. I am talking about powers that would be available to and acceptable by the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

For argument's sake it may well be, because of the distances involved in the territories, because of the sparsity of the population and because of the huge expense of building highways, that even though the British North America Act says the building of highways comes under provincial jurisdiction the building of such highways in the territories should come under the authority of the federal Parliament. But even if you think that is correct, we do not make that sort of determination in an arbitrary manner. That would not be ethical, morally correct or democratic.

The minister and his officials have talked to the people of the territories. I have been talking of money, and money does not buy people. That is something the minister might consider in some of his other activities. If he were to converse with the people of the territories who are affected he might find that the people of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon would agree to some acceptable powers within the framework of the constitution. But this decision ought not to be arbitrary on the part of the government.

I have talked about highway building. I said that because of the financial considerations involved, the sparsity of the population and the distances in the territories, highway construction might come under federal authority. Other areas could be involved. The minister could discover some of them if he were to—I was about to use the word "consult", but it is clear the minister distrusts the value of consultation with respect to his dealings with Indians—talk to the people of the territories. In any event, I suggest he consult

[Mr. Howard (Skeena).]

the Indian people and learn what consultation means. Consultations are necessary if the development of democratic institutions is to go ahead. It would be better if the minister were to consult our Indians instead of giving them the impression that the great white father in Ottawa is imposing his will with respect to various matters being considered.

Within the bill itself is contained a proposed amendment to the Territorial Lands Act which speaks of concern about the ecosystem in the north. It speaks of concern about pollution control, but really this is oriented toward and is designed to regulate economic development, exploration and the finding of mineral and other resources in the area. I consider this matter to be rightfully included in that part of the bill. It is an important part of it. Often there has been mention of the delicacy of the ecosystem in the north. The delicacy of ecological relationships is much greater in the north than it is in southern Canada. Those relationships are different there because of climatic conditions, geography, topography and the like. In southern Canada, because of the more temperate climate, nature can heal its wounds more readily and tolerate destructive influences more readily than in the north. In the north, because of the climate and the delicate ecological balance it is not always possible for nature to repair damage done to her.

I read in an article that in the early 1900's a party of explorers went north and used tracked vehicles. The tracks removed vegetation overcover, which was sparse in any event. Significantly, those tracks are still there some 60 years later. Not only are the tracks there, but because the vegetation was ripped up, because the muskeg had no protection, the tracks left by those vehicles have been turned into trenches by the passage of time, trenches which impede the passage of cariboo and other animals and bar the way to their feeding grounds. These trenches are there 60 or 70 years after the original tracks were imprinted in the area, and so far as I can gather it will be impossible for nature to repair that damage.

In oil and mineral exploration and in the forest industry many tracked vehicles are used and much ground is torn up, to the ultimate disadvantage of animals and people who live in the area. Therefore, the part of the bill relating to the Territorial Lands Act is vitally important. Nevertheless, I do not think it will be very effective in dealing with