

Northwest Territories Act

council is empowered to sit only when the federal government wants it to sit and where the federal government wants it to sit. It has been the habit to hold one of the meetings of the council in Ottawa each year and one of the meetings in the Northwest Territories. This situation is unacceptable.

It may interest members of the committee to know that the Northwest Territories Council is the only legislative body in the world that sits outside its own jurisdiction to make laws affecting people inside its jurisdiction. It is like the legislature of any of the provinces going to the Northwest Territories to hold a sitting and make laws to affect its own citizens.

I am not going to introduce an amendment with respect to this situation but I would suggest to the minister that it can easily be cured by the addition of a subclause reading, "the seat of government of the territories shall be that prescribed by the Commissioner in Council and may, from time to time, be changed by it."

● (1:00 p.m.)

By such an amendment we would be placing the power in the hands of the representatives of the people, inasmuch as there are to be seven elected members, to determine where their government shall meet. There again is a principle with which I am sure the hon. member for the Northwest Territories agrees and which I hope he will support.

The Deputy Chairman: Shall clause 1 carry?

Mr. Nielsen: Will the minister, Mr. Chairman, give the committee the benefit of his observations with regard to the representations I have made on behalf of the people of the north regarding the site of government?

The Deputy Chairman: Shall clause 1 carry?

Mr. Nielsen: I am waiting, Mr. Chairman, for a reply from the minister.

Mr. Laing: Mr. Chairman, I am quite certain the hon. member has introduced a matter which is not covered in any of the amendments which we have proposed in the bill. As I said yesterday, I believe there is at present a lovely little village, Fort Smith, which is called the capital of the Northwest Territories. I am told that representations have been made to the Carrothers commission in respect of a permanent capital. I am not certain this is so, but I have been told

[Mr. Nielsen.]

such representations have been made and that there may be some observations made by the commission in respect of those views. If not, it will be the responsibility of the council, I assume, to be confirmed by us, to decide on a permanent capital.

It is well known that the commissioner of the Northwest Territories Council has a very small staff here. I have made the statement in the Northwest Territories and make it here that the next commissioner of the Northwest Territories Council is going to become a resident of the Northwest Territories at the earliest possible moment and that an increasing proportion of staff, now under the direction of the Department of Northern Affairs, northern administration branch, will be transferred to the oversight of the commissioner and the council in the Northwest Territories. In other words, I have said I want more government on the ground as rapidly as possible. This will be our policy but we must use some discretion in this regard.

There are many tasks involved in the affairs of the north which now and for the foreseeable future can be conducted far more economically in Ottawa than in some of the extreme areas of the northern Arctic Islands. I am sure my hon. friend is aware that to put up a house which probably costs \$15,000 here in Ottawa would cost \$38,000 or \$40,000 on Ellesmere Island or at Resolute.

I am giving some indication of the problems with which we are confronted. We are engaged in a tremendous number of enterprises. As the hon. member probably knows, we deliver oil to the residents of the Northwest Territories and are pricing it at from 18 cents a gallon to 58 cents a gallon. We must bear in mind the cost of operation and do these things as effectively as we can from here, at the same time giving conviction to the people there that they have their government adjacent and available to them when they want to make representations to it.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to.

On clause 3—*Sessional indemnity for members.*

Mr. Nielsen: This clause, Mr. Chairman, is the one which deals with the indemnity and expenses of the members of the Northwest Territories Council, both elected and appointed. My submission simply is that either the members of the Northwest Territories