

settlement of land claims with the Indian people of the Yukon Territory.

The second issue in the Yukon which has gained importance in the past few years, and which requires consideration in this chamber, is the question of whether or not the Yukon Territory should be given the status of Canada's eleventh province. At the outset, let me say that I am absolutely and totally in favour of the Yukon people having the right to make their own decisions about those matters which affect them directly. This is not the case now in many areas, and I personally will support any initiative to change the Yukon Act to allow more responsibility to the local government. However, I am not prepared to endorse provincehood for the Yukon without first knowing what kind of financial arrangements can be worked out with the Government of Canada and without a great deal of discussion and debate about the probable results of independence.

● (1440)

We have had the honourable leader of the official opposition in the other place come to the Yukon recently and promise provincehood within the first term after he is elected as leader of this country. He attached no conditions or provisos to that statement. In my opinion, provincehood at this time could prove disastrous for the Yukon. In fact, funding for services now provided by the Government of Canada through the territorial government could be drastically cut because of a lack of resource revenue.

I would be extremely unhappy to see the people of the Yukon forced to sell the priceless resources of that vast area to the highest bidder, allowing the area to be raped and pillaged in order to sustain a standard of living which Yukoners have become accustomed to through the stability and funding provided by the federal government.

The Yukon consists of an area equal to the combined size of all four Atlantic provinces, with a population of only 22,000, which is approximately 8,000 fewer than the City of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Of this number, some 5,000 or 6,000 are natives; approximately 5,500 are under 18 years of age, and of the remaining 11,000 a large percentage have resided in the Yukon for less than five years.

A provincial legislature, to be effective, would require a minimum of 25 to 30 members. In the last territorial election, held in 1974, a total of 6,145 people voted. It is possible that Yukoners would be electing members of a legislature with only 75 votes and, indeed, a cabinet of 10 ministers could theoretically be formed with only 700 or 800 votes having been cast in their favour. This, in effect, would mean that any influential pressure group, such as the mining industry, labour or conservationists, could, with a minimum of effort and organization, control the province. As long as they have satisfied some 700 or 800 people, they could theoretically gain control and govern the Yukon to the detriment of all other Yukoners and, indeed, all other Canadians.

There would, without the proper planning and foresight, be a very difficult transitional period, and possibly an economical-

ly depressed situation in the Yukon for a number of years. It would be during this time that entrepreneurs and foreign speculators would be able to move into the Yukon in abundance and, with their huge bankrolls, literally buy the entire area. When a mere 22,000 people, a large proportion of whom are transients by nature, find that their educational system cannot be supported, that the welfare system cannot be supported, that roads cannot be maintained, and that the recreations facilities in many areas cannot be serviced or maintained, then I predict they would be prepared to make financial arrangements which, in the long run, would not be beneficial to the Yukon or to Canada as a whole.

Are we prepared for provincial status before there exists a permanent population, committed to the future of the Yukon and willing and able to become involved in the democratic process? I, for one, am not.

Another question which must be answered before provincial status can become a reality concerns the role of Indian people in the Yukon. Provincial status is not a question of "if"; it is only a question of when.

I would suggest to the honourable leader of the official opposition in the other place that there are many questions to be answered before the Yukon can become a province "during his first term of office." My only reassurance is that his "first term of office" is likely so far away that the Yukon will have time to properly plan for provincehood.

The third matter about which I wish to speak today is the much publicized natural gas pipeline which is proposed from Prudhoe Bay in Alaska through the Yukon Territory and into Alberta for delivery of gas to the lower 48 states. Let there be no misunderstanding: this is an American line for the delivery of American gas to Americans. It will not be used to move gas from the Mackenzie Delta and the Beaufort Sea to Canadian markets.

We have always welcomed development in the past and will continue to do so. However, future development must fit into our social, political and economic environments. It must also provide some real benefit to Yukoners. We recognize that the heavily populated areas of our continent require some of the vast energy supplies of the north. Pipelines have been a part of Yukon history and a familiar component in our daily lives. We have experienced satisfactory developments in the past, and have services which could be expanded to accommodate new development in the future. However, if pipelines are to be built across our territory, appropriate safeguards must be maintained and we must reap a fair share of the benefits. The Yukon is an economic and political reality and must be treated as such.

I have stated publicly before, and wish to reiterate now, that unless there is a direct and substantial benefit to the Yukon people, we do not want to see a pipeline built across the Yukon, and I suggest to you that unless there is a direct and lasting benefit to the people of Canada, the Government of Canada should not entertain allowing its land, services and resources to be used in this manner.