

Northwest Territories Act

in the Northwest Territories I know there are many from that group who could serve well in representing their people on the Northwest Territories council.

• (12:00 noon)

We are now going to include in the council for the first time the eastern Arctic which up until the present time has been unrepresented in the governmental affairs of the Northwest Territories. I am reminded, Mr. Chairman, that we might even have the opportunity, were all members on the council elected, to have the first woman representative on the council of the Northwest Territories. Recently one of the most illustrious members of our Canadian Eskimos has returned to her native community on Baffin Island. I refer, of course, to Mary Panegoosho who with her husband has now settled at Grise Fiord. I am sure that if she were named as a candidate in the elections to follow the acceptance of this recommendation she might well become the first woman member of the Northwest Territories Council.

I do not believe that we need to say anything further. We all recognize the need for self-government and autonomy in the north and I trust that the minister will accept the recommendation of the hon. member for Yukon that we now seize the opportunity to move one step farther toward this goal in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Howard: Mr. Chairman, it always amazes me how members sitting on the government side somehow manage to let the word "however" creep into their speeches.

Mr. Nielsen: And "but" too.

Mr. Howard: With due respect, that is what we have heard from the member for the Northwest Territories. I do not want to get involved in arguments with him about the correctness or otherwise of approaching matters such as this. I accept fully his declaration that he agrees with the principles we have been advancing in parliament for some years. It seemed to me that he almost committed the minister to introduce another bill to amend the Northwest Territories Act this fall and I would be interested to know whether the minister intends to come back this fall with another amendment dealing with this question of self-government. If the minister will make that declaration it will place the matter before us in an entirely different light. Presumably all that will be involved in this respect is a by-election for the election of

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

additional members to the council for a certain period of office. Perhaps such members may not even have an opportunity to sit on the council because it may not meet in the period of time during which they may be members.

If it is the intention of the government to proceed this fall to introduce a self-government measure in parliament, then this puts us in an entirely different position. I would appreciate it if the minister would clear this up for us. I will pose a direct question to the minister. Is it the intention of the government to deal with this matter this fall?

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Shall the clause carry?

Mr. Nielsen: No. The minister has a question to answer. Surely he can do that.

Mr. Laing: Mr. Chairman, we have had a considerable amount of discussion on this section. I do not know that all of it has been to the point and probably what I am about to say will not be wholly relevant either. This section is an indication of the purpose of the bill. We were told last year and the year before by the then member of parliament for the Northwest Territories that the most grievous injustice of all was the fact that here was a section of the Northwest Territories where the residents in the area had no opportunity to elect members to the council.

Overhanging this entire bill is the fact that within a matter of two or three months at the most we expect the report from the Carrothers Commission with reference to what in their view we should do about the government of the Northwest Territories. I would very much hesitate to introduce an amendment at this time which might anticipate that report. Where I to have introduced such an amendment, I am quite certain that members on the other side of the house would have immediately got up and attacked me because I had introduced such an amendment.

We are now taking care of what has been a manifestation of injustice in the areas of the high Arctic, the east Arctic and Keewatin. We made a commitment to the council last year, and they have passed enabling legislation within their own council to fill these three positions at the earliest date possible. There was no criticism from the former member for the Northwest Territories in regard to appointing members to the council from southern Canada. Indeed, I have