

Yukon and N.W.T. Government

Having agreed to undertake the tremendous expenditures necessary if northern development is to be possible, the government says, "We will give to those who are searching for oil or minerals virtually a free hand. We will give them concessions. We will provide subsidies or loans to any who can find minerals, power, oil, natural gas or anything else of value in the north country." All these people may go in and enjoy the special advantages of tax provisions which allow for fast write-offs and fast depreciation.

The government will be spending the money, Mr. Speaker, on developing the north but the private entrepreneur, speculator or businessman will reap the harvest. We think that is not good enough. We think that if the government is to spend tremendous sums in installing basic services which are necessary for development, it, representing the people of Canada, at least ought to be a partner in reaping the harvest. The government should share in the benefits of development and not just put up the money.

May I now speak again of what I consider the basic defects in the minister's approach to the Carrothers Commission's recommendations. The Carrothers Commission said that education is the touchstone to the future of the north. That is true. I will not be unfair and say the government has done nothing about education. Of course, it has done a great deal about education. We spend more money educating our young people in the north than ever before. Indian and Eskimo children are staying in school longer than ever. But I am disturbed about the kind of education they are getting. It ignores completely their hereditary cultures and languages. I have heard of teachers not speaking one word of the Eskimo or Indian language teaching grade 1 Indian or Eskimo children who spoke not a word of English. Teachers go into the north country after going through, at most, a two or three week crash course designed to acquaint them with the problems, history and culture of the north country. That kind of thing just is not good enough—unless, consciously or subconsciously, we are trying to assimilate completely the native people of northern Canada and make their culture, language and way of life disappear completely. I do not know if that is the minister's approach but it certainly is not mine nor my party's. We believe that the Indians and Eskimos of the north have the democratic right of choosing their way of life. They have the right of choosing if they want to work as the white man works and live as the white man lives.

[Mr. Orlikow.]

That choice must be left entirely to them. But it is our responsibility to make sure they have that choice. In other words, it is our responsibility to provide education, housing, health standards and employment opportunities so that if they want to adopt our way of life, they may do so.

I recognize our dilemma. I have said that we believe the territorial councils should be given more power; but we also recognize that if they are given more power immediately the white people in the territories, and I am speaking particularly of the Northwest Territories, will quickly control to a greater extent the destiny of the territories. As the Carrothers Commission said, the white people have the education, drive and know-how, and they are the ones who are elected to the territorial councils.

Speaking from memory, and I do not think I am wrong, I do not recall one Eskimo being included in the Northwest Territories Council—

Mr. Chrétien: One Eskimo is elected and one is appointed.

• (12:50 p.m.)

Mr. Orlikow: After listening to the people, one does not have to be an expert to realize that the real power rests with the white people because of their experience and background. We think this is wrong, Mr. Speaker. The majority of the people in the Northwest Territories are, and will continue to be for many years, of Indian and Eskimo origin.

How should we deal with this situation? We believe the way to do it would be to encourage a very rapid extension of local government to many more communities. The minister talked about doing this, but there is very little evidence that he has in fact done much to extend local government to the communities in a form appropriate to those communities. We believe the powers given to local government, whether it is called a municipal council, band council or local district, must be increased. We agree with the minister that the most important area for the growth of self-government lies with the local communities.

Many of the institutions of local government are unfamiliar to the native people. Both the institutions and the people will have to change. It is only when the native peoples have learned the lesson of political power and how to exercise it that the necessary redistribution of power in the north can take place.