

Canada Lands Surveys Act

men who knew the terrain quite well, who could draw up plans so that the owners who later would live on those sites would recognize their lands and situate them very specifically. I also has occasion to participate in some research work to locate some land which belonged to an estate but had not been surveyed, as a result of which, quarrels and a trial ensued. That cost a lot of money, precisely because the land had not been surveyed: it should have been before, but had never been. Unfortunately, the heirs to the land spent huge amounts of money trying to prove they really had title to the land.

I feel that for a Canadian who owns land it is very important that he should know where it is located and what its limits are. To my mind, it is so important that he should know it by memory. The small plot of land one lives on, one really owns, is the embryo of one's country. Bill C-4 provides more than that.

Such surveys apply to the lands under the jurisdiction of the federal government, and as the parliamentary secretary said earlier, that will add to the responsibilities of Canada lands surveyors who will be drawing boundary lines even under water; as an amendment in this regard was passed this year and as Canada has extended its territorial limit to 200 miles, it will be necessary to be clear on that point if we want to be significant. We will then be able to defend our privileges and our rights if foreign fishermen were to fish within our limit.

This legislation also amends the selection procedures of new candidates. In my opinion, this new method seems at first sight excellent, for it quite clearly determines the requirements. No one shall be disqualified, for a provision of the legislation provides that the surveyors who are presently performing their duties will not be disqualified. They will be allowed to perform their duties without being disturbed.

The main feature of this bill is that it gives a commissioner in the Northwest Territories and in the Yukon the kind of authority Parliament wants to have. I think this is a provision in the bill we will have to consider more particularly in committee. To be convinced about this I shall certainly have to hear extremely valid reasons because I do not agree, at this time at least, with the idea that a commissioner should enjoy powers similar to those of a minister of the Parliament of Canada. Perhaps there are reasons of which I am not aware and when I know them I may change my mind but, in any event, right now I find it is not quite correct to give a commissioner this kind of responsibility. In brief, the bill concerns a very considerable expanse of land and the subsoil may contain unknown wealth. By giving the commissioner authority to have the land surveyed without any form of control on the part of the Parliament of Canada, we would be careless, I think.

Anyway, there is another clause in the bill which worries me a little, the one providing that the minister may appoint somebody from his office. That clause reads as follows:

"Surveyor General" means a person who is a Canada Lands Surveyor and is appointed as Surveyor General in the manner authorized by law or a person authorized by the minister to carry out the duties of the Surveyor General."

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

I am a little concerned by the fact that the minister is empowered to appoint somebody to carry out the role of the Surveyor General. That leaves the impression that it is not necessary for the appointee to be a surveyor. Here again, when we review the bill in committee I hope the parliamentary secretary or the minister will be able to give us explanations to justify that amendment to the act.

I would not like to go any further on this subject because as a whole this bill, save for the restrictions I mentioned, is a step forward. It had become necessary to bring in amendments to the legislation, to get it clearer, so that we may really identify the borders of Canada without encroaching upon the rights of the provinces. As a matter of fact, there are also surveyors who carry out their profession in areas of provincial jurisdiction. The legislation provides that those surveyors can occasionally do surveys and act as if they were surveyors under Canadian government jurisdiction. Therefore, I do not see why they might have to complain about those changes which do not alter their rights in any way but, on the contrary, add to them since they are provided with even more responsibilities and they are being recognized as a necessary occupation. I am happy for them. I am convinced that Bill C-4 will certainly pass once amended in the way I have indicated and I assume that these people will be glad to have a clear and precise piece of legislation. It will thus encourage them to do their duties and to carry out their occupation in the best interests of the public.

● (1240)

[English]

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I am interested in two aspects of the bill, one of which has been mentioned by two of the previous speakers, namely, our relationship to the Dominion. It seems to me that we are being picayune in wanting to change the word "Dominion" to "Canada".

● (1250)

I have no objection to our country being called Canada. I have never really objected to the word "Dominion", but I think it is very picayune and it must take the kind of mentality I see in some quarters to think that it is going to be advantageous to bring forward every piece of legislation and change the word "Dominion" to "Canada". If the government really were sincere, it would bring forward enabling legislation to establish the basis for the definition of Canada. Then it would apply that substantive legislation to all the other pieces of legislation which are affected.

I can see us bringing a bill forward with regard to the Dominion Observatory to have it changed to the Canada Observatory. I can see us bringing forward all the other pieces of legislation which use the word "Dominion". It seems to me that we should first establish a definition for Canada. We should do that in a piece of legislation calling Canada "Canada". However, we should not be playing with it. How long do the Liberals think they can take advantage of using our establishment as a Dominion for 110 years, and use it for other purposes on a perpetual basis by changing the word "Dominion"?