

*Northwest Territories*

I wish to mention one other matter which perhaps may not be too clearly within the ambit of this resolution, but which I suggest might well be given consideration by the minister. One of the very important operations of the government in the Northwest Territories, in the area covered by this legislation, is the Northern Transportation Company Limited. That transportation company is of immense importance to the development of that area. Those who have travelled through the Northwest Territories down the Mackenzie, and have seen the haulage of important freight on the Athabasca, on the Mackenzie and throughout that area will realize that this is a key transportation system in the development of the area.

As hon. members know, Northern Transportation Company Limited is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Eldorado Mining and Refining Limited. While it is true that the relationship between these two companies had to do with the fact that it was essential that there be a transportation system to carry out the ore from the Eldorado mine, that is only part of the activities of this Northern Transportation Company Limited.

I do believe that consideration should be given by the government to placing the supervision of this transportation system under the council which might well be charged with the responsibility for laying down the terms of operation, subject to the appropriate checks and balances, and also to consider the freight rates. An examination of the statements of the company in recent years will show that substantial profits have been made. So far as one can see from the statements adequate provision has been made for depreciation and other proper precautions taken to maintain the capital structure of the company.

That being so it seems to me that this privately-owned company should have regard to the fact that this is an essential service and that a reasonable profit would be the wise course rather than seeking to make large profits which impose burdens not only upon Eldorado Mining and Refining Limited, which by virtue of the nature of its activities can well support them, but also upon all individuals and smaller organizations which use the system and find it vital to their activities within the area.

I leave these two suggestions with the minister in the earnest hope that they will receive serious consideration. I suggest, first, that at the very time we have emphasized our belief in the north we express once again our faith in the developments that have taken place within these

past few years by increasing the number of elected representatives on the council and, second, that this great transportation system which is so vital to the development of the Northwest Territories be brought under effective supervision and some measure of direction by the council itself.

**Mr. Lesage:** I just want to point out that it was only in 1951 that this house decided that there would be elected representatives on the council, and I would add that the elected representatives, who in fact are sitting here in Ottawa this afternoon, are only in their fifth session. They have been elected only once and the number of electors is far from great, considering the large area they represent. I sincerely believe that it is difficult with the population scattered, as it is, and with islands of scattered population situated as they are, to have a better division than there is at present, but I will certainly discuss the matter tonight with the officials of my department and even with the members of the council who happen to be in Ottawa today.

**Mr. Drew:** I was aware that the council were here in Ottawa today, and it was because of that fact that I made the suggestion at this time. I realize the number of electors is very small by the standards of even the less populated constituencies in the southern part of Canada—

**Mr. Lesage:** Even provincially.

**Mr. Drew:**—or even in a provincial constituency, but I am not so impressed with the number of electors. I am more impressed by the fact that it would be a move toward self-government if we brought the number of elected members up to the number of the appointed members, for I think, without labouring the matter, it would be a significant gesture along with the assertions we are making of our belief in the Northwest Territories and in the act which we are now passing.

**Mr. Macdonnell:** I did not detect in the minister's statement an exact indication as to the change in the law which is being brought about by section (a) which reads:

That the governor in council may, after the expiration of two years from the return of the writs of election, dissolve the council . . .

What does the existing act contain?

**Mr. Lesage:** The act at present in force is chapter 195, which says there will be representatives elected for three years; but my hon. friend will understand that if they are elected for three years and sit for three years, the writs would then have to be returned and an election would have to be called during winter. That is why it is necessary