

Yukon Act

There are five amendments in the bill to be introduced. The first four deal with administration. The first of the four extends the power of borrowing and lending money to the territorial government under the control of the governor in council. The second amendment provides for the appointment of deputy police magistrates in a similar fashion to the amendment to the Northwest Territories Act last year. The third amendment provides for the appointment of judicial officers who in this particular instance happen to be small debt officers. The fourth amendment is with regard to the importation of liquor into the territories. At the present time it can be imported only under licence from the commissioner. This amendment broadens the power in order to give the commissioner power to delegate someone else to give permission to import liquor into the territory where they have no provincial or territorial liquor board and therefore must import it from the neighbouring provinces.

The fifth amendment is not an administrative amendment. It is simply a boundary definition. At the time of setting up the Yukon boundary the territory was described in general terms which were neither precise nor satisfactory in the light of the survey definition that we require today. Therefore the fifth amendment is simply a precise survey description from detailed markers to indicate precisely the boundaries of the Yukon territory. With this explanation of the resolution I think I have given sufficient reasons to indicate the national interest in making these amendments at this time.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Chairman, I have just a few brief remarks on the resolution brought forward by the minister and in support of it. I feel that it will do a lot towards achieving provincial status and autonomy eventually for the Yukon in much the same fashion as our good neighbour to the north, Alaska, has very recently achieved statehood.

The amendment concerning the borrowing and lending of money will enable all municipalities in the Yukon to enter more widely into the field of municipal improvements such as low rental housing, paving, new road construction, hospital services and the like. Those services have perhaps been progressing a little slowly in the more outlying communities in the Yukon because of lack of funds. This amendment will allow the municipalities concerned through the territorial government, to borrow the funds necessary to accomplish such projects.

The amendment respecting the appointment of deputy police magistrates is a welcome step forward. The Yukon territory has one police magistrate whose jurisdiction covers

over 203,000 square miles. Inasmuch as it is the government's intention, I am sure, to provide a first-class system for the administration of justice, I am sure all members will agree that we cannot allow that system to be thwarted or frustrated by distance or by terrain. The magistrate at Whitehorse is a very busy man and I am sure that the amendment will alleviate a good deal of the load he now has to carry. I do not mean to convey by these remarks that the Yukon is lawless but I wish to assure hon. members that the court is very busy. At the moment the magistrate has civil jurisdiction as well and, of course, he cannot be everywhere at once.

The amendment with regard to small debt officials is, of course, a very welcome step forward as is the boundary amendment which finally and in technical form delineates the boundary of the Yukon territory.

Finally, the amendment regarding the transportation of liquor into the Yukon comes as a very welcome step forward inasmuch as heretofore it was impossible, if the commissioner was away, to keep stocks on hand, as it were. I see in the amendments, especially the one concerning extension of the powers of the commissioner to borrow and lend money, a very firm and long step forward to Yukon finally achieving provincial status.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could put one question to the minister. I must apologize to him. I admit at once that the question is not strictly relevant and if he is not in a position to answer it I do not intend to press it. He mentioned the power to import liquor. I wondered what the Yukon territory had done about the provisions in the most recent amendment to the Indian Act with respect to giving equal rights to the Indians to purchase liquor.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): The hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate is aware, of course, that it is not strictly relevant but it has relevancy in that it does bear on our responsibilities in the territories. An order in council was passed by the federal government approving the territorial ordinance with regard to the right of Indians to drink in licensed premises in the Northwest Territories. That has gone through and I believe it already exists in the Yukon, if my memory serves me correctly. I think the hon. member for the Yukon would know more about the details of that.

Mr. Nielsen: If I may comment on that, Mr. Chairman, the Indian citizen in the Yukon has the right to purchase and consume beer on the premises. However, an Indian, that is one with Indian status, has not the right to purchase liquor at all or to be in possession