

*Northwest Territories Act*

service to the idea of democracy. Either we are creating a legislative council composed of elected representatives of the people—and this means precisely what the phrase indicates—or we are not. There is no point in attempting to hide the fact that the institution as it now exists is unrepresentative by introducing so-called expertise when making appointments. This simply will not sit.

I do not accuse or charge any member of this house with an intentional lack of appreciation of what goes on in the north. But the north is a long way from here and its history and its people and its land are largely unknown to the members of this house, simply because they have not been there, because they have not read enough, because they do not know their geography. But one thing is sure: There is not a member in this House of Commons who believes that in any institution which is supposed to be representative and democratic there is a place for people who are appointed rather than elected. It is either an elected representative body or it is not. It boils down to that.

The people of the north want more say in their own affairs, as the minister himself agrees. They will not get it through this process of appointing members to a legislative council. They will get it only when they can express their wishes through their elected representatives in a truly democratic institution. This will not come about by continuing the colonial idea of appointing people to what is supposed to be an elected representative body. That is wrong.

● (8:30 p.m.)

The minister has said—and I speak only with respect to the principle of the bill—that a reasonable indemnity must be set for the members who are being asked to serve on this council. With this I agree. But in the same breath that he says we want to move gradually toward giving the people in the north more responsibility, more say in their own affairs, he is asking this House of Commons, which is a federal elected body, to set the indemnities of another elected body. Surely hon. members can see how wrong that is. It is like asking this house to set the indemnities for the legislature of the province of Quebec, or the legislature of Alberta, or the legislature of P.E.I.

If there are people capable of serving on the council—and the minister knows and has said that there are—then surely they are responsible enough to set their own indemnities. Or are we to treat these representatives

[Mr. Nielsen.]

who sit on this council like babies? Are we in this house to watch over their every move and say, "You can have only so many dollars and no more?" If they are responsible enough to set their own indemnities, but they set them too high, they will have to answer to their own electors.

The minister is one of many who hold the view—and I do not hold it against them for doing so, because it is simply another point of view—that he who pays the piper must call the tune, that there can be no real autonomy, or progress toward autonomy until such time as people in the north can pay their way. That, sir, was not the case when the province of Manitoba was carved out of the Northwest Territories in 1879. There were fewer white citizens in that province in that day than there are in the Yukon and Northwest Territories today.

Per capita, there are greater subsidies being paid to some of the other provinces than there are to the north. There is no price tag on democracy. If, sir, you admit that there are responsible people in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon—and the minister knows and says there are—then surely they can be entrusted with the expenditure of funds which they derive from taxing themselves and their own resources, and with the expenditure of federal grants and subsidies, in the same way as any provincial legislature.

I am not suggesting for a moment that this house or this country move in the immediate direction of autonomy, or of self-government tomorrow in the north. That would be irresponsible; but I am suggesting that there should be a planned and phased blueprint now for moving in this direction. It is a misconception of democratic progress in that direction to suggest that we must, forever and a day, watch over every action of the members of the legislative council of the Northwest Territories because they cannot be trusted to spend, not only their own moneys but those that come from and have been approved by this house. That is not the case. The best example that can be cited is the schoolboard in Yellowknife which has been functioning for many years, largely spending federal funds.

The minister has said something about the need to move in the direction of more autonomy. I am not going to discuss specific provisions of the bill, nor am I going to say to the minister that he was intentionally paying lip service to that aim, because I know he is a dedicated individual when it