

*Constitution Acts*

We have lots of great speeches about Arctic sovereignty. We are all for supporting Arctic sovereignty. We are a northern nation, but do we really believe it or do we just say, "We in the south will make decisions for those folks up there. They really don't deserve a chance to participate in one of the most fundamental documents in Canada's history, the Constitution"?

A number of years ago, to lend a little more perspective to this, the now Commissioner of the Yukon made some very interesting observations on history and the lack of Governments, particularly federal Governments, devolving powers to the people in various sectors of the country. Commissioner McKinnon, speaking four or five years ago said:

The Federal Government today remains as distant, hesitant and uncompromising towards the principle of responsible government for the Yukon as did the Macdonald Government of the 1870s and the 1880s for the then Northwest Territories now Alberta and Saskatchewan.

He quoted also in this piece—which is quite interesting and I would recommend it to anyone who wants to know what northerners really have to say—from the *Prince Albert Times* of February 22, 1884. In an editorial we find:

If history is to be taken as a guide, what could be plainer than without rebellion the people of the northwest need expect nothing, while with rebellion successful or otherwise they may reasonably expect to get their rights.

We are not talking about rebellion yet. We are talking about the principles of fundamental justice. As you will know, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories have taken their case to the highest court in the land. They have not received a favourable response on various technical points, but on principle there has, in fact, been some encouragement. I would like to run over these principles of fundamental justice which we in the North, and I would suggest many other Canadians, feel have been abrogated by the process. In my motion I am attempting to redress that by at least giving elected territorial leaders a voice in constitutional development of this country.

The first principle clearly contravened is that of the duty of fairness, which includes the right to be heard, the right to give reasons for decisions which affect those rights. In this case, it has not happened. On the question of fairness and fundamental rights, the Prime Minister clearly, legally under the Yukon Act and the Northwest Territories Act, has fiduciary responsibility to the residents of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, which is just a high-falutin' term for saying that the Prime Minister is supposed to ensure that he or she looks after the interests of the Territories.

We feel very strongly that this interest was not carried out in this case. In fact it would be impossible for a Prime Minister of Canada to juggle the best interests of the nation along with the best interests of the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories and so on. However, we do anticipate that the Prime Minister who has this responsibility will exercise it in the national interest. This, we say, has not been done and has not been done in the issue of fairness to northerners. We are

not asking, and in this motion I am not suggesting, given the legal status of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories that are not provinces at this point, that we should be considering or saying that they must have a vote at the First Ministers Conferences.

From 1982 to 1987 our government leaders did often attend First Ministers' conferences. However, they were not allowed to speak. Can you imagine this ludicrous situation? You have the leaders of our country sitting around a table and you have the leaders of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories sitting in the back rows not able to express the views of the constituents they have been elected to represent. Surely that is a ludicrous situation. Would the leaders from British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba or Ontario put up with that? Of course not. It is ridiculous. I mentioned before that when our leaders did attempt to participate in 1987 they were basically shown the sidewalk and told that the Prime Minister would look after their interests. Clearly that has not been done.

The principle of fairness is the essential element here. But there is another principle. That is simply the expedient and realistic principle of making sure that those people who are affected by decisions are involved in those decisions. We have many, many historic examples of when they are not. What happens? As quoted by the *Prince Alberta* paper, there could be rebellion. Certainly if not rebellion, there is a form of alienation from Canada and Canadians.

I would remind this House that the people who live in the Northwest Territories and the people who live in the Yukon are those very people who will protect Arctic sovereignty, who have an interest in protecting that sovereignty, and who will continue to reside there. They will not leave. They are there to stay. The aboriginal people have been there 20,000 to 30,000 years. It is estimated that the aboriginal people in Old Crow, Yukon, have been in that area for 30,000 years. That is sovereignty and that is what we are talking about. Are we saying that those people cannot have a voice in Canada in terms of what Canada will become? I hope not. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that that is exactly what has happened.

• (1450)

There is a very strong feeling in the North—and I have been from the Baffin region to the Western Arctic to the Yukon in the past two to three weeks and I have seen it—there is unanimity on one point. There is not unanimity on very much in the North. There are a lot of individualists there. A great many of us have very specific opinions about things and about what we would like to see happen. There is the feeling that people have been left out, that they have been treated unfairly and that Canadian justice does not apply to those north of 60.

There is something quoted that is quoted so often that it really became a bit of cliché, but in this instance it really does not apply. It is that justice must not only be done but be seen to be done. I am very well aware of the constitutional and the legal position of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. But