

Northern Canada Power Commission Act

Mr. Nesbitt: Both terms are equally good. The government's whole attitude has been: We know what is best for you. Most of these people have never even been in the Yukon or the Northwest Territories, yet they say; we know what is best. You come across that attitude very frequently. You see it in civil servants who came to this country in recent years and acquired senior positions. Of course, half of them have never been outside Ottawa or very far from here. Not only have they seen little of Canada but they have come from other countries. I do not intend to mention names, but there is a long list of them.

Mr. Nielsen: They are the 24-hour experts.

Mr. Nesbitt: They did not do very well in their own countries and have tried to perpetuate their mistakes here.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Nesbitt: It is shameful. For a long time the elected members of Parliament have performed their functions adequately. We have always had a very good division of responsibility. Members of this House understand local problems. They enjoy the confidence of those who elected them. More recently the members of a very good public service have carried out the administrative duties relating to political decisions. Some of those engaged in the public service have wanted to do more. Their story is similar to the allegories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that were written in France, Germany and elsewhere. They were considered children's fairy stories, but really they were political allegories. I am thinking of stories like the fisherman's wife who wanted the sun, moon and everything else. Some of our senior public servants were not satisfied with influencing ministers indirectly or doing their jobs for them; they wanted to be in the driver's seat.

• (8:20 p.m.)

This situation became increasingly apparent in the Pearson administration. Right Hon. L. B. Pearson, the previous Prime Minister, was a former civil servant. Mr. Pickersgill, a former minister, was a very eminent, capable and able civil servant. These people did well. The mental attitude of the senior echelon, or mandarins as they are known, moved from the public service into the cabinet. We still find this situation. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury), the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Sharp) and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) are all graduates of the senior school of the civil service. There is little doubt that they dominate the cabinet. This bill is another example of mixing the administrative level of government and the political decision-making which is supposed to be carried out by the elected members. It is true that the Prime Minister and some members of the cabinet, former civil servants, have been elected. We know why they were elected. There are still a number of seats in this country which are regarded as safe political seats: that is how they got here.

[Mr. Nielsen.]

There is one matter which does not relate in general terms to the unsatisfactory side of legislation but to this legislation specifically. This was pointed out by the hon. member for Yukon. This bill should not go to committee. It should not be passed by this House until related bills which were passed in the last session, and proposed legislation that will affect that part of Canada, are carefully analyzed as to the impact and economic effect they will have on the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Arctic islands. To pass this bill as it stands would do a great disservice to the development of our country. Canadians are looking forward to the development of our northern territories and their great wealth. This development must be carried out in a way that is best for all Canadians.

Grave doubts have been expressed by members of this House and by nearly all the major organizations in the Yukon. They know best; they have to live with this situation. Many of the theoretical types sit in armchairs in Ottawa and have never visited that part of the country. Some consideration should be given to local wishes in this matter, but the government has not done this in the past. Maybe in 1971, the first year of the seventies, the government will turn over a new leaf and will pay attention to the wishes of the local people, those affected by legislation invented by mandarins in Ottawa. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That all the words after "that" be left out and the following inserted:

"this bill be read upon a day six months hereafter"

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I suppose that "upon a day six months hereafter" means that it not be read upon a day six months hereafter, but just in the hereafter.

Mr. Nielsen: As far as possible, in the hereafter.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): And read in another place.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): I think it is clear that the purpose is not so much to talk about the desirability of bringing power facilities and the like to the people in the territories as it is to kill and destroy the concept of the bill. But that is neither here nor there. I think we were all amused by the applause that preceded private members' business at five o'clock. There were two or three minutes of non-partisan applause. I noticed that government members participated with great relish. I enjoyed the applause more than the speech that followed, in terms of content and its value to the debate.

It seems that one of the fundamental objections to the bill is the idea that power rates should be equalized between the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. I have some sympathy for that concept. In the political development that has existed in both territories there has been a different and more advanced concept with regard to the political structure in the Yukon than there has in the Northwest Territories. Depending upon the degree of pressure that the government keeps on the brakes insofar as progress toward political autonomy is concerned, presumably the Yukon will reach the stage of provincial