

Northwest Territories

some being amendments of the new Northwest Territories Act which, as I have mentioned, will be proclaimed after the revised Criminal Code has been enacted by parliament. They provide for the filling of a vacancy on the council when a member resigns; and this, as hon. members know, happened last summer when the hon. member for Mackenzie River, who is sitting in the house at the present time, resigned as one of the members of council to run as a candidate for a seat in this house. As I say, they provide for the filling of a vacancy on the council when a member resigns and clarify the sections relating to the indemnity and allowances for members. Also authority is being sought to give the commissioner power to hold land for the beneficial use of the territories.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Chairman, I wish to mention something that I think should be under consideration. I submit it at this point for the consideration of the minister who is sponsoring the resolution, having regard to the fact this is the resolution stage and that any suggestions could be incorporated before the bill was presented, if they commended themselves to the government as a result of the view that was expressed.

It seems to me that although the time is relatively short within which this area has been brought under some measure of administrative control from within the territory itself, the time has already passed to review and pass on it this session. At present the council consists of the commissioner and five members appointed by the government, whereas three are elected within the territory. The elections for these three representatives will probably take place next summer. I should think there would be a desire to move toward representative government in that area as rapidly as possible, consistent with the problems that exist and consistent also with the necessity of moving reasonably cautiously in dealing with such a large area.

I notice that one of the three constituencies includes Aklavik, Paulatuk and Stanton on the Arctic coast and also Fort Liard, which is within sight of the British Columbia boundary. The area is so enormous that it is impossible to imagine that any one person could even pretend to represent it. I realize that whatever division is made the area represented is going to be extremely large, but I should think the experience with this council has already reached the point where consideration might be given at this time to increasing the number of elected representatives to five as the next stage in the move

toward actual local representation, which would still give a substantial measure of supervision by the dominion government because the commissioner would still represent the balance between the elected and appointed bodies.

I should think the appointment of two additional elected members and the division of the area into five representative districts would make it possible for this new council which is to be set up in 1954 to come a stage closer to effective representation, and also to create areas of representation which would provide at least some opportunity to carry out the supervision that is expected, and to maintain some measure of relationship.

I should think the objective in the mind of everyone who has considered this subject is to reach the point where there will be no appointed representatives, where the whole council will be made up of elected representatives. We all look to the time when development will have increased to the point where even if this area is still short of actual provincial status, it will have reached a point rather similar to that, with such limitations as may be imposed by the actual population.

I should think right now would be a good time to make this change along with the change we have just been discussing in the name of the department which will deal with this subject matter. We are emphasizing our faith in the north, and it seems to me this is a good time to increase the number of elected representatives so they will balance the appointed representatives and give greater opportunity for representation, consistent with the same contact with the government. If this were done by way of amendment to the act which will be brought in as a result of this resolution, it would provide a most striking gesture of faith in the northland, the confidence which has been expressed in the form of the resolution with which we are dealing. It would also provide convincing evidence to the people living in the Northwest Territories that we are conscious of their desire to move as rapidly as possible, consistent with good judgment, toward the day when there will be self-government in that area.

I leave that thought with the minister, not only from the point of view of what I regard as an advisable step in the representation of that area but because we have been seeking to emphasize in the remarks that have been made our confidence in the north of Canada. I would think that we dramatize, or at least in some measure emphasize, our real belief in the north by taking positive steps of this kind.