

Yukon Minerals Act

suggest that more members on the other side should follow the lead of the hon. member, who said to the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) that perhaps they were not too far apart. After the impassioned plea made by the hon. member for Yukon as well as by the hon. member for Churchill (Mr. Simpson), I feel that when given the opportunity to do so I should add my concern to theirs.

I have often said that the role of the opposition can be extremely difficult and that at times it is misunderstood. I think there are three prime functions of an opposition. The first is to make the government behave. However, we will not go into that matter now. The second is that we are the watchdogs of the people's rights.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: I see the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) is leaving the chamber. He may have found some offence in these remarks. It is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that we are the watchdogs of the people's rights. Having heard the hon. member for Yukon and the hon. member for Churchill elaborate in no uncertain terms and with strength of conviction about the objections they have received from organizations, agencies, mining associations and companies as well as from those who are most important, our native people, I think the phrase I used "watchdogs of the people" has meaning. We must have participatory democracy, and this is the only way we can get it. If the government will not listen to those who are directly affected, then I say it is up to the opposition to voice their objections.

The third matter which I believe is of consequence in the role of the opposition is that it must provide constructive criticism to bills which the government introduces. Surely we cannot complain about such a role, because it is important. I think the government, in its charity, will admit that we do have the capacity to understand bills and to submit amendments which will make bills good—not for our sake on this side, not for the sake of hon. members on the other side or for that of the Parliament of Canada but, rather, for the Canadian people.

● (3:50 p.m.)

When I look at Bill C-187, entitled an act respecting minerals in the Yukon territory, I feel that the mining industry is certainly of importance in this country. The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra said that we should give due deliberation to this bill as we will to the legislation which will follow the white paper on tax reform. I hope that in the context of the white paper on tax reform and the mining industry, the government will show some understanding of the need for a viable and economic industry. This is what my friends on this side of the House have been talking about. We want to do a thorough job with respect to this matter.

The hon. member for the Yukon and the hon. member for Churchill have indicated that there are at least four main objections to this bill from which we shall not back away because it is necessary that they be implanted in

[Mr. Alexander.]

the government's mind in order that the government has second thoughts on this most important piece of legislation.

But I say to the minister who has just come back to the chamber that what is more important is that the hon. member for Churchill was extremely concerned—I am trying to be as fair as I possibly can—about the lack of understanding by the government regarding the rights of our native peoples. I say this also to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner), because for obvious reasons and with my background I feel some comradeship with our native peoples and with the problems with which they are faced.

I am not saying that the government is deliberately ignoring their plight and their pleas, but there seems to be no action. When members on this side point out to the government in no uncertain terms that they are ignoring the aboriginal rights of the native peoples, that they have shown no consistent understanding of their problems, it is time for many more on this side to stand and speak for the rights of our native peoples.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: I admit that I am not an expert, but surely to goodness it is high time we realized that the government cannot continue bringing in legislation which ignores the rights of these people who I think have justification in asking us to understand, probe and come up with the necessary solutions. The hon. member was very concerned about royalties which our native peoples do not seem to be sharing. This is one of our main objections. Also, the industry that is directly involved seems to be ignored in terms of what they expect and should get.

Another matter that concerns me as a lawyer was mentioned by the hon. member for Yukon, who is also a very good lawyer, which I am sure the Minister of Justice will admit. The hon. member pointed out that there was an absence of judicial appeal from bureaucratic decision. Surely this is so. I have every faith in the ability of the hon. member who pointed this out to us. I feel it is a matter the minister should look into, because without the judicial appeal required in a democratic society we cannot speak of participatory democracy.

What also concerned the hon. member, and concerns me as a backbencher trying to learn his job, is that every time I am confronted with a bill I find that there are regulatory powers everywhere you look. This is required for flexibility. It is the Big Brother approach. I am told that it is required for efficiency, yet I heard the hon. member say that for the past 50 years these industries have been able to carry on without this type of unwarranted and unnecessary intervention. There is too much regulation. It seems to me that this government is attempting to control the industry to tie it up in knots in order that it can no longer be a viable and economic operation.

Another matter that concerns us on this side is the administration of the legislation. In Clause 3 of the bill I