

power, and have traditionally displayed better corporate citizenship. The committee heard evidence that some of these private companies have helped with community affairs which the government and the power commission have not been able to do. It was established that the northwest power commission has sold power to one of the private companies in excess of the price at which it is selling power to its own customers, yet this private company has been able to satisfy its own customers.

The cost of doing business in the Yukon is very high, as it is in the Northwest Territories. We agree that the establishment of rate zones, as is the case with other Crown corporations operating in the provinces, is likely to be a good thing; but why did it have to be done in this manner? Why were we not given the financial statements for the last three years which show the profit made by some of the plants operating in these territories and might embarrass us in regard to how these funds should be applied? Why cannot we be honest with each other and say that there are areas in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon which have extreme difficulty in maintaining some kind of rate that would enable a private citizen to use electricity in his home and to have some of the essential services? If we had seen these financial statements we would have been able to compare them with the operations of the private companies, to the embarrassment of the government.

The motion before the House asks that the rate be set by someone other than the cabinet here in Ottawa. Surely there must be some local autonomy in a vital question like this. Let us recall the fact that in some provinces, owing to the lack of rural electrification, it became necessary for the government to assume the responsibility of taking over private enterprise in order to assure the proper distribution of power. Since everything is shaped in that way, surely we must also take the final step, once equal distribution is achieved, of insisting that the setting of the rates remains with an authority in the area where the power is to be generated, transmitted and distributed.

● (1630)

Surely the minister will want to rise before this debate is completed and lend his support to that idea. I have had occasion to travel to the Yukon with the minister and I have enjoyed a number of private discussions with him when he has expressed his desire and willingness to pass on as much autonomy as possible to the Yukon and Northwest Territories. Surely, in an area as vital as this, the minister will want to assure adequate representation on the part of those elected to protect the interests of these territories, particularly in relation to the matter under discussion.

We must remember that in the Yukon and Northwest Territories 40 per cent of all the jobs are held by civil servants. It is much easier to understand the speeches and remarks of hon. members from these territories, who are constantly expressing their suspicion about the activities and dealings between Ottawa and the territorial councils, when we realize how many civil servants there are in the territories administering the business of the people there who are spread over such a vast area.

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We are not talking about an area that is poor, or one that needs subsidization. We are talking about territories that are carrying on activities such as gold mining, the harvesting of asbestos and tungsten, as well as fur trapping, commercial fishing in the Yukon, and territories with a significant number of oil discoveries. Our eager eyes are looking at these territories as the storehouse of our future; they have sawmills and many other important industries which contribute to the well-being of this country as a whole. All kinds of funds are being transferred from the Yukon and Northwest Territories to Ottawa.

What the people in the territories are really asking for is a place at the table where vital decisions are made. The hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth) has already said he will support this motion, and my colleague who will speak after me intends to propose an amendment to motion No. 3 in the name of the hon. member for Yukon. I hope the minister will insist on a time slot during this debate in order to express his own desire to adhere to the wishes of the people of the territories and to respond to this very significant amendment in a positive way.

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Madam Speaker, my remarks will be relatively brief, as the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) and the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle) have spoken at length on motion No. 3 and the proposed amendment. During the Easter break I had the opportunity of reading some of the history of Saskatchewan and Alberta and their aspirations and hopes prior to becoming provinces of Canada. A somewhat similar situation exists today in respect of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories in that there is hope that before long these areas will become provinces of Canada.

It was interesting to note that a number of the briefs presented by organizations that appeared before the committee expressed this hope. Also, the minister appeared before the committee and indicated he was looking forward to the day when each of the territories became a province. The officials of the NCPA said they were looking forward to the day when the commission was divided in two, one part being in the Northwest Territories to handle power production and distribution there and the other in the Yukon to do the same thing in that area. This is what will happen when each of the territories becomes a province. We have to be fair to the people in the territories. I do not think these areas will become provinces within the next year or two, but we must plan gradually for the day when they do. It seems to me this can be done by giving the territorial councils and the elected representatives of the territories more power.

The motion as it stands, and I intend to propose an amendment to it, has this idea as its purpose. Motion No. 3 provides for the substitution of "commissioner in council" for "governor in council". This would mean that representatives of the people of the Yukon and Northwest Territories would have more input and more control over the setting of rates. It seems to me this would be one step toward self-government by the people in these territories. I propose to read my amendment to motion No. 3 first, and then discuss it, Madam Speaker. I move:

That motion No. 3 to amend Bill C-13, an act to amend the Northern Canada Power Commission Act, be amended by deleting all of the