

*Northern Canada Power Commission*

There is often resistance to this kind of transfer. In the Northern Accord we see an instance in which the Minister responsible can see the legitimate value and need for this while his colleagues are much more reticent about it. This, of course, has very much to do with money and with who will receive the revenues. The territories now receive substantial revenues from the federal Government and the intent of things like NCPC and the Northern Accord is to ensure that the territories will be able to raise their own revenues and become much less dependent on federal revenues, to become much more self-sufficient which, indeed, has been a stated goal of the Northwest Territories' Government as well.

The Government Leader, for example, is quoted in the *Edmonton Journal* in January of this year in reference to this energy accord describing what it really means to the territories. He states that the ensuing royalties could provide the means to "break the cycle of economic dependence on the South, so that we can solve our frightening social problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and a Third World birth rate".

As the previous speaker said, the elected government leaders of the territories do not even attend First Ministers' Conferences and therefore often do not have input into many of the policy and decision matters which are taking place in Canada today. We must work toward building the blocks of self-sufficiency. I would agree that the Bill under discussion today does that.

I would like to outline a number of principles which this Bill represents which are very much the principles which we would like to see developed in other areas in the transfer and devolution of programs to the territories. I am sure my colleague from the Northwest Territories would agree with these principles as well. First, this Bill is built on the basic principle of a commercially viable operation. In this case, the NCPC has to have the assets and administrative control in order to develop a commercially viable operation. At the same time, it cannot be saddled with a huge debt load accumulated by previous administrations. So the assumption of the debt load by the federal Government has certainly been a positive aspect of this territorial transfer. The other principle, of course, is the deference paid and the consideration of the workers, the fact that a number will be asked to transfer from the head office in Edmonton to some community in the Northwest Territories.

• (1610)

They would be welcome to come to the Yukon, but I suspect the Government of the Northwest Territories would like them to move there. There has been fairly careful attention paid in this agreement to the requirements of the workers with respect to severance benefits where required and to ensuring that current employees can have a position with the Northern Canada Power Commission should they wish to move to the North. That is another very important principle.

I would like to give an example of how that principle in other areas is not as easily developed. For example, in the Yukon at this time there are a number of programs under discussion for devolution, one of which is the health and the hospital program. The hospital in the Yukon was built in the 1950s and certainly needs to be replaced. It has many requirements. It is under-financed and under-staffed at this time. Therefore, there has been a reluctance on the part of the Yukon Government to accept the transfer of that understaffed and under-financed facility. The federal Government, on the other hand, is quite willing to transfer the administration of an under-financed facility, but we in the Yukon are certainly not going to accept that.

It would be wished that other ministries, in this case, the Department of National Health and Welfare, would accept the same principles that have been accepted and elucidated in this Bill, the principle of making these things financially viable. Transferring a program that is under-funded, giving the territories responsibility for programs which already do not have enough funds is not enhancing the self-sufficiency and autonomy of the territories. It is simply moving a problem over to someone else. As I say, fortunately in Bill C-125 this is not the case.

Under the principles governing the sale are the particular points with respect to consideration for staff. Again, in other items of devolution and transfer to the territories this has not been a consideration. It would be hoped that in the future some example would be taken from this kind of agreement undertaken with the Northwest Territories.

There are a number of areas one can talk about when one talks about the North, the assumption of powers in the North and the transfer of federal programs. I mentioned having consulted with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in the Northwest Territories, and we are in agreement with the passage of this Bill. We have some minor concerns but they are ones which will basically be negotiated between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories. I think it is important to look at this Bill in the context of its importance for the territories and their self-sufficiency.

There is an interesting article on the political evolution of the Canadian north by Gurston Dacks. He states in part:

Will the North stagnate or will it grow politically? The answer to this question will depend on many factors, but chief among them will be the policies of the federal Government. As in all colonial situations, the colonial power, Ottawa, has the ability to define the terms of political debate. It alone has the power to respond to claims for greater self-determination.

In conclusion, I would say that it is our view that this Bill in many ways does that. It has been the subject of fairly lengthy negotiations, as these things usually are, but it is an example of a transfer of responsibility that will enhance the eventual political responsibility of the territories, in my view. On that note, I would like to say simply that I am sure, as has been the case in the Yukon, that the Northwest Territories will very efficiently and effectively manage this resource.