

development of the private sector in Canada's North, I would like to make it clear to the Hon. Member that in my riding, the industrial sector includes both a number of private enterprises and Government-owned corporations. As far as iron ore is concerned, I don't think the federal Government, the present Government, brought about the present situation which, as far as I can see, is a matter of economics.

In Canada's North, we are often faced with the same situation. There is oil, which is in demand today, but there are also minerals, Mr. Speaker, which are there for us to mine and market. However, my colleagues on this side of the House as well as those opposite will realize that it would be entirely premature at this stage to issue licences to various companies or to approve various industrial proposals at a time when we are about to sign agreements on native land claims. I think it is a matter of responsibility, and it is also absolutely vital to any negotiations that we should know how the land will be apportioned and what are the costs involved.

The Member for Yukon also raised the fact that Keiwit was anxious to proceed immediately. Perhaps I may point out, for the benefit of the House, that negotiations are still taking place between the Department and the company in question, and that it was never the Department's intention to set aside the Keiwit proposal. The important thing now is to ensure that the Keiwit proposal, as so many other proposals and suggestions, is analyzed in the light of native land claims. I think that is extremely important. I think it is unrealistic of the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce to ask for the creation of separate Departments of Northern Development and Indian Affairs. Anyone who knows the history of Canada's North, and I am sure my friends opposite do, knows perfectly well that all these issues are related. Anyone who decided to work only on the business aspects without considering the other issues would soon realize that not only is this a useless exercise, but it only makes the problem worse.

I think Members opposite who are as experienced as Members of this side of the House will agree that proceeding today with issuing licences and agreeing to large scale projects in the Yukon territory, while within a few weeks we can expect to have definitive proposals signed by various parties, would be premature and irresponsible on the part of the Department. I think we should realize that during the past four years, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has done tremendous work in bringing all parties towards an agreement that will be binding on the signatory parties. I think that is important. Of course it would be nice to be able to act quickly and get into the North and develop it, but doing so without having a formal agreement with the groups in the North would, in my view, be an abuse of authority. I think the Department is right in wanting to examine this aspect more specifically, before giving the go ahead for any project whatsoever.

I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the House, that a number of suggestions were submitted to the Department, not only the Keiwit project, but many others. When I hear the Member for Yukon asking for the Minister's

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resignation, I must say his request seems rather out of touch with reality, since that is not going to solve the problem. On the contrary, there may be a case for asking for additional time, although I agree these delays are a nuisance, but it does take time for people to understand each other. It takes time, if we are to avoid pitched battles, to reach a carefully considered agreement that will be acceptable to the two or three parties involved, because we have to consider the Yukon Territory as such, and the native people's issue and the position of the federal Government. It is a complex matter involving several parties. Once an agreement is concluded, I think we will be able to proceed quickly, while respecting the rights of all concerned. That is very important, and that is how this country should develop. I think this question can not be properly debated if we ignore these basic issues.

● (1600)

Where it says in today's motion, and I quote:

That this House regards the Government's failure to take action to encourage the development of Canada's resource industries and ensure their competitiveness in world markets as a betrayal of all Canadians—

I think that is a misrepresentation of facts and a verbal abuse of the present situation.

Anyone who has visited Canada's North, Mr. Speaker, will acknowledge that a great deal has been done about developing the North. The main problem in this country is our domestic markets. That is often the problem with which we are faced when dealing with the issue of developing these areas, and we must not forget another major problem, which is the high cost of access to these areas and the cost of the projects themselves, considering the constraints of our northern climate and the distances to be travelled. All this is, of course, related to the availability of transportation. Therefore, taking a very harsh stand against the Government and using censorious language is not going to solve the problem.

The development of the North will always be a tremendous challenge for Canadians. People tend to refer to it as a problem. It is a fact that developing the North takes a lot of imagination, a lot of financial resources and a lot of know-how. But taken as a whole, those projects amount to quite a challenge. Several companies are now operating very far up north, including Crown corporations—I might point out that Crown corporations have made their presence felt in the Beaufort Sea and everywhere in the Arctic—and lots of research is being done to develop the North.

The way the motion reads, Mr. Speaker, it is suggested that we have not done everything possible and that it remains—

—a betrayal of all Canadians whose standard of living depends upon the resource sector of Canada's economy and calls upon the Government to bring an end to the nationalization of Canadian resource industries which has discouraged investment in Canada;

—but I think it does not reflect reality. Again the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) made every effort in the last budget to make it easier for companies to drill and come up with concrete projects to diversify the economy in Canada's Arctic lands, but all that cannot be done overnight.