

*Yukon and Territorial Lands Acts*

If the hon. member would look up the statistics for the year I have mentioned, and subsequent years, he would find that great strides have been made in the field of the health of Indians and that the picture is much better today than it was some years ago.

The Minister of Indian Affairs, in his reference to conservation, maintained that as a result of the experience we have gained in southern Canada we shall be able to do a much better job in planning resource and land use in the northern territories. This is a noble sentiment and I trust his hopes will be realized. I was pleased to hear the words the minister used. He used the word "ecology" which is becoming a fashionable term nowadays—it means the relation of living things to their environment. He talked about eco-systems and ecological balance. These were not terms commonly used a few years ago. As one who has done research in connection with plant ecology in particular, I say he cannot go wrong in using the ecological method in connection with land use planning, and I commend him on taking such an approach. I think we can learn a lot from the mistakes which have been made in southern Canada, not only in connection with pollution measures and land use but in connection with our treatment of the native peoples. In the Yukon and in the Northwest Territories we have an opportunity to do things for the native people which have not been done before. The best way to proceed is to ensure that the native peoples are not separated—to ensure that they receive the same services from the same governments as do other people. I welcome what the minister is doing in turning over responsibility for a great many of these services to the Territorial Council and to the government of the Yukon.

I am very optimistic about the future of the native people. I take this optimistic view because there is evidence of greater participation by them in the over-all economic planning and political life of this country. If we do the right things in the Territories and in the Yukon, bringing the native people into the mainstream of Canadian affairs, it will be possible for them to have a much better life in the future.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I must point out that if the minister speaks now he will close the debate.

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take too much time

[Mr. Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo).]

of the House but I should like to make a few comments in reply to some of the remarks made by hon. members. I do not want to repeat myself. We had a full debate on this issue in November, and I have also had occasion to make speeches to the people in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon about what the government is planning for those areas.

All the arguments advanced in the House by opposition members have been quite negative as far as the legislation is concerned and were not too well founded. What we are proposing to do here is to move forward by granting more autonomy to the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. I should like to make particular reference to the remarks of the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) who was so critical. Since I have been minister I have been in the north many times, perhaps more often than the hon. member himself has been in Ottawa.

**Mr. Aiken:** Perhaps that makes him better qualified to speak for them.

**Mr. Chrétien:** What was that?

**Mr. Aiken:** I said, perhaps he is better qualified to speak for the territories.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Chrétien:** I think we are taking a very far reaching step in the Northwest Territories and Yukon. On the committee that I will order the commissioners to form, there will be two elected members who are part of the executive committee. It is true that this is not provided in the bill, but this is because we want more flexibility. The fact that no provision is made for this in the bill means nothing at all, since the commissioners always act on the direction of the minister.

I recall a few years ago when the Conservative party was in power, the government made a small gesture to the territories by forming a little committee, and in order to make it sound big they so provided in the act. Since that time we have formed many committees but have not incorporated the proposals in the act because they were not needed. The commissioners have the authority to form any committees they want, and these will be set up in the territories.

We are creating a framework within which there will be a better relationship between legislative and executive power. Although we are retaining control in Ottawa, we are not doing so merely for our own personal benefit;