

Notes and Institute News

GOVERNMENT IN THE CANADIAN NORTH

The Learned Societies of Canada, including the Royal Society of Canada and the Canadian Political Science Association, come together each year to hold their separate annual sessions. This affords an excellent opportunity for inter-society communication, of both personal and professional value to members, and a wider consideration of current problems than would otherwise be possible.

It was therefore of particular interest to the Arctic Institute that, at the suggestion of a senior member of the Institute staff, the Canadian Political Science Association included the subject "Government in the North" on its agenda for the 1966 meetings which were held at the University of Sherbrooke in the Province of Quebec.

The main speakers at the two-hour session were Dr. Morris Zaslow of the Department of History, University of Western Ontario, and Dr. Trevor Lloyd, Geography Department, McGill University. Dr. Zaslow, an authority on administration in northern regions, related the present governmental and administrative positions of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories to the situation in western Canada at the turn of the century, and traced the historical development of responsible government that led, in 1905, to the granting of provincial status to Alberta and Saskatchewan. He pointed out that although the two Territories had reached different stages in their administrative development, both were demanding full responsible government and were critical of the present administrations. In particular, they resented the veto powers residing in the two Commissioners and the retention of control of natural resources by the Federal Government.

Dr. Zaslow also observed that none of the traditional elements of reform movements seemed present in the Territories. There was no colourful leader calling the population to action in either Territory, nor was there any broad claim of social and political injustice or charge of economic exploitation by the Federal Government. The reason for this seemed to be that the main problems confronting northern citizens were self-centred and very local, because the people were preoccupied with maintaining their livelihood. The Indians and

Eskimos comprised about one-fifth of the Yukon population and three-fifths of that in the Northwest Territories. Government employees accounted for a further one-fifth in each Territory and were generally short-term residents and excluded from political activity. White seasonal workers and others who went North for a few years to make what they could, had little concern for the political development of the North. There was only a small nucleus of second and third generation white northerners who were involved in the future. These were, broadly speaking, established merchants, businessmen, and professional men who had a continuing stake in the North, and who, among them, had a virtual monopoly of Council seats and political thought.

Dr. Zaslow also commented that the general trend of thinking among this group would lead to the achievement of provincial status. They were moving toward the assumption of a role in the federal-provincial conferences. Already the federal-provincial tax-sharing principles were applied in essence to the Territories through Federal grants. A weakness at present was the non-existence, or at best, rudimentary form of municipal administrations. This made it necessary for the Territorial administrations to devote much attention to local affairs which properly should be dealt with by the communities themselves. He noted also that the general pattern of political development of the Western provinces appeared to have been accepted as right and proper for both Territories without consideration of any other possibilities.

The Discussant, Dr. Trevor Lloyd, emphasized the clear trend towards self government and suggested that some useful ideas might be gained by a study of the many newly freed countries that had emerged with the rejection of the colonial systems of the nineteenth century. The British parliamentary system had not been successful in such cases. The North bore little resemblance to the southern parts of Canada. It was unlikely that a Constitution framed a century ago for a predominantly rural population would be relevant for Canada today. There was much less reason to suppose that it was suitable for a vast and empty hinterland. A hand-me-down from the prairies was unlikely to work. In fact, the Yukon had been trying for seventy-

five years to evolve in that fashion and had been unable to make it work satisfactorily. It was noteworthy that the Soviet Union had no federal constitution in the far North since the whole area lay within a single republic.

Dr. Lloyd suggested that Canada's North would comprise an urban, technological society in small oases scattered through large, otherwise empty, areas. This would be in keeping with modern trends everywhere. Such communities would be devoted to resource development and would demand all the comforts of the South. They would, in time, be all that mattered, since inevitably the Indian and Eskimo groups would be assimilated into such communities or would move South. We had a great obligation to ensure that the Indian and Eskimos were given every opportunity to develop as individuals, but this would be transitory as there could be no permanent segregation of "national" groups in the North of tomorrow. He suggested that these well-developed communities of "urban nomads" would require intercommunication of some kind, but that they would be largely self-sufficient and largely linked to industry in the urban areas of the South. Their direct political concern would be with municipal administration. Because of radio and transportation facilities, such "city states" of the North might be no further apart than were Athens and Sparta in ancient Greece.

Dr. Lloyd wondered whether it was in the best interest to "balkanize" northern resources by ceding control to the Territorial governments or whether these should not remain national resources in the broad sense. It was possible that relatively inexperienced territorial administrations might not be able to resist short-term opportunities for financial return and thereby might prejudice the long-term best utilization. If population patterns followed the trends he predicted, local administrators concerned with municipal problems were most unlikely to control natural resources to the best advantage.

Disregarding the disposition of natural resources for the moment as a separate problem, Dr. Lloyd posed the question: "Just what are the best forms of government? The government required is to administer at most a few hundred thousand people in relatively small highly developed but unrelated communities dotted throughout a vast non-agricultural hinterland."

Considerable discussion followed these two dissertations. It became clear that the pattern of development of self-government in the Canadian West could not be traced in detail in the more recent processes in the Territories. However the analogy was upheld in general

terms as the Territories, it was recognized, were moving toward a similar end result under the stimulus of local demands, and the progressive steps taken by the Federal Government.

A senior government official challenged the contention that the Commissioners in the Territories had a veto power over any Council legislation. He rightly pointed out that the veto power in fact lay only with the Governor-General in Council and would be exercised through the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources. It was noteworthy that that was in fact similar to the veto power of the Governor-General in Council over provincial legislation and that it had been exercised only very rarely in either Territory. One was left, nevertheless, with the impression that although "powers of veto" oversimplified and might not properly express his reasons for discontent, the northern citizen had a valid point. The Commissioners and their territorial staff, together with the representatives of Federal Departments performing functions not delegated to the Territorial Governments, did, in fact, form the executive body. They were not responsible to the people of the Territories in the political sense, however conscientiously they worked in their best interest.

The session was well attended and attracted, among other distinguished people, Mr. B. G. Sivertz, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, Mr. C. M. Bolgar representing the Deputy Minister of Northern Affairs, Mr. Eric Gourdeau, the Administrator of New Quebec, and Dean A. W. R. Corrothers and Professor Jean Beetz, respectively Chairman and a member of the Advisory Commission on the Development of Government in the Northwest Territories. The Institute hopes to see continuing and increasing attention given to the North by the Canadian Political Science Association and other Learned Societies in Canada.

H. W. LOVE

AWARD OF INSTITUTE GRANTS FOR 1966

At the regular November 1965 meeting of the Institute's Research Committee and at a number of supplementary meetings held up to the end of August 1966, eighty-nine applications for grants-in-aid, amounting in all to \$648,474, were considered.

An analysis by scientific discipline of the sixty-four applications recommended for support by the Institute is given in Table 1. Direct financial support by the Institute is