

the Canadian North is no different from other regions. Where it is different is in the problems posed by its great area and small, scattered population. The "rep by pop" cry of Canada's revolutionary days could solve no problems in the North. The same spirit of new ideas and new approaches that has been essential in meeting the economic challenge has been no less essential in meeting the political challenge.

During most of Canada's history, the Northland was a vast, unorganized territory with only a nominal form of government. Its permanent settlements were scattered trading posts and missions, and its way of life required little regulation. The real beginning of political evolution had to await the discovery and development of mineral wealth, and consequent increase in population.

This occurred in 1896 when the Klondike gold strike was made and thousands of people swarmed into the area. Two years later, an Act of Parliament made the Yukon a separate Territory and gave it a local government composed of a Commissioner and Legislative Council of six members, all appointed by the Federal Government. In 1899, the Act was amended to provide for the election of two additional members to the Legislative Council and, in 1902, a further amendment increased the size of the Council to 11 members, five of whom were elected. At the same time, the right to elect a member to the House of Commons was granted. In 1908, by further amendment, the Legislative Council became wholly elective, with ten members serving for a three-year term. Dawson was chosen as the capital.

As the amount of gold produced dwindled and population consequently decreased, the size of the Council was reduced, but it retained its fully elective character. In 1919, the Council was reduced to three members and it remained at this number until 1951. After the second world war, the Yukon again entered a period of rapid expansion, paced by the growing base-metals mining industry. Between 1941 and 1951 its population increased from 5,000 to 9,000. As a consequence, in 1951, the size of the Council was increased to five members, at which number it remains at the present time. In 1953, the seat of government was moved to Whitehorse.

In the Northwest Territories, mineral discoveries, on which economic and thus political development are based, came at a much later date than in the Yukon. After the first world war, the discovery of oil at Norman Wells caused a brief flurry of interest; in 1930, pitchblende ore, a source of radium and uranium, was discovered at Great Bear Lake; and in 1933 the Yellowknife gold field was discovered. Until these mineral finds were made, the Northwest Territories was a thinly populated area that had already passed through various elementary stages of government as the western provinces were gradually carved out of the great Canadian Northwest. It assumed approximately its present boundaries in 1905, at which time the previous territorial government was discontinued and provision was made for a Commissioner and Council of four members or fewer to administer the government. The seat of government was fixed at Ottawa. The powers of the Council remained dormant for some time, because the economy of the region was still based on the fur trade, which is capable of sustaining only a scanty human population.

The Norman Wells discovery necessitated provision for a more active administration, and the size of the Council was increased in 1921 to six and one member was designated as Deputy Commissioner. The Council was still wholly appointive. No further change was made until 1947, when a resident of Yellowknife was appointed to the Council.