

*Government Orders*

Among others, I met with the Nisga'a nation, the main party to the negotiations in British Columbia. I had the extreme privilege of visiting, with Mr. Adams, five Nisga'a communities settled in an a marvelous area. A few hundred years ago, two Nisga'a communities were wiped off the map when a volcano erupted in that part of the country. Today the Nisga'a people revere the ruins of these ancient villages and are really anxious to reach an agreement.

This is no exception to the usual attitude among the communities I met in British Columbia. Up to now, they always chose the path of negotiation in good faith rather than confrontation. Why do I mention the Nisga'a? Because, as I said in my opening remarks, I think they are at the centre of these negotiations. As you know the Nisga'a band is probably—in fact, it is—the only nation that is not under the umbrella of the British Columbia Treaty Commission because they had started their negotiations even before the commission was created, and the federal government recognized it.

I will give a short overview of the commission's progress in a few moments. As a matter of fact, having begun to negotiate before any other band, the Nisga'a are necessarily a length ahead the others now.

However, they feel it is important for the negotiations to progress as fast as possible. Unfortunately, they are now blocked, both at the commission and with the Nisga'a.

Speaking of concerns in this regard, both the Chilcotin band and the Carrier-Sekanni band I visited told me that, if the negotiations with the Nisga'a did not progress, the commission's efforts to negotiate agreements with nations and communities of British Columbia could grind to a halt. This is why I feel we should take an interest in what is happening to the Nisga'a, who right now are having a really bad time.

• (1630)

Personally, I witnessed the terrible devastation of the forest environment. A certain territory has been recognized as belonging to the Nisga'a as part of their ancestral land or aboriginal territory. We know what the terms "aboriginal territory" mean. The Nisga'a are asking for only 8 per cent of this territory recognized by the court.

However, despite the fact that their claim is rather modest and reasonable, the Nisga'a are witnessing today the plundering of their forests. Between 100 and 200 trucks a day are taking away freshly cut logs. They are asking themselves: "My God, are we ever going to come to an agreement to put an end to this plundering, and manage to protect our hunting and fishing rights recognized by the Canadian constitution?" I have, in my office, videos which show the dreadful consequences of the clear cuts

in British Columbia where, once the loggers have gone through, there is nothing left, neither trees nor beasts. Very often, the damage is irreparable. Such forests will take hundreds of years to recover.

In their opinion, had such forest been burned to the ground it would recover faster than it will in the present situation.

It is a race to clear cut as much of the forest as possible, and the Chilcotin, the Carrier-Sekanni and the Nisga'a, have a feeling that governments are allowing this wanton destruction, this mad race for profit, this rush to clear cut everything. When it is all over, when all the resources are gone, they believe they will be told: "Now, we are ready to resume negotiations and we are willing to give you the territory", a territory which will have been emptied, as I just said, of all its natural resources.

The Nisga'a are extremely concerned. I even wrote to the premier of British Columbia, asking him to put an end to this plundering. As you know, British Columbia is a big province, as big as Quebec, if not bigger. You have to travel by plane to reach these native communities. One can see the damage done by logging companies through clear cutting.

I take this opportunity to say that I, for one, find shocking this complete waste of a province's natural resources on what will probably be considered native lands, and recognized as such. We remain silent before the devastation, and the natives must wait for the negotiations to continue. In the meantime, they see that their lands keep deteriorating. It was worth mentioning, I think.

I also noticed a general shortage of housing in the communities; several generations live under one roof. There are health problems.

Finally, there is a pressing need to conclude treaties in British Columbia. I will talk about Quebec native communities later. In this regard, Quebec is a model. British Columbia would benefit from imitating the Quebec government, which has great respect for natives, in spite of what is reported in the media. I can assure you of the contrary, as I will demonstrate. I wish good luck to the people of British Columbia, hoping they will follow in Quebec's footsteps with regard to native peoples.

Let me talk a little about the Chilcotin people from British Columbia, because they are very outspoken. Something funny happened. When I told them that the official opposition critic wished to meet them, it apparently created quite a commotion in the community. The fact that a nasty separatist from Quebec, even though a critic for Indian affairs and as such in a position to put questions regularly to the minister, wanted to come to talk with them about their problems made them rather uneasy. They were a little concerned. However I found them to be great people, and warriors. I call them "warriors" because the