

Government Orders

number going on to post-secondary institutions, universities and colleges has almost doubled in the past five years.

This is an extremely positive development and one that reflects well on the leadership of aboriginal communities and the governments that have supported their efforts. It also means there is a growing generation of job-ready young people coming to the employment market with higher hopes, higher aspirations and higher expectations than ever before. Unless these hopes and expectations are reasonably met, they will quickly be replaced by despair and disillusionment.

The very fact that these land claims and self-government agreements will come into effect will create an environment of greater certainty and stability in Yukon. This in turn will have a positive effect on investment, particularly in the important resource sectors of mining and mineral development. An upsurge in activity in these key areas will certainly have a ripple effect throughout Yukon's economy and will create improved job opportunities for both aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.

• (1825)

Our government, the Liberal government, is convinced that aboriginal economic development must be largely a bottom-up exercise. Aboriginal controlled community enterprises and effective community development institutions will be the main engines of economic growth for them and for the entire communities. We are further convinced that the combination of the powers inherent in self-government taken in tandem with the funding provided in the land claims agreement will create a climate in which such development and institutions will have a much better chance of succeeding.

Self-government can work to provide wealth and jobs, provided the arrangements have been carefully worked out and provided the First Nations concerned are willing and able to take maximum advantage of the opportunities presented to them. This is certainly the case with regard to Yukon's First Nations. The self-government agreements have been painstakingly worked through negotiations spanning many years.

The leadership of Yukon's First Nations are ready and willing to take on the job of governing and rebuilding their communities. There is no reason to delay. There is every reason for us to give speedy consideration and passage of this self-government legislation so that the work can begin. I think the government did the right thing in putting forward the motions last night to ensure this legislation would pass before we adjourn this House for the summer recess.

I must say as well that self-government is not the be all and end all. As several aboriginal leaders have pointed out recently, simply signing a document cannot make the problems of their people disappear overnight. On the other hand, this government is convinced that all these problems of housing, social services, education and economic progress can be more effectively ad-

vanced and dealt with within the environment of greater local autonomy, a sound financial framework and equally and mutually respectful relations among governments at all levels. That is what self-government is essentially about. It is why this government has brought this legislation before the House.

I conclude by urging all members of this House, including my friends in the Reform Party, to support this legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, we are now only a few minutes away from adopting a bill on which my party the government and our Reform Party colleagues have worked for many hours.

Before getting into the nuts and bolts of the bill before the House today, I would like to talk about how my perspective on the work of a parliamentarian has changed. It is light years away from what I expected my work as a parliamentarian to be, especially as a critic for a sector as difficult and complex as Indian Affairs. We sometimes think that the life of a parliamentarian, before we actually experience it ourselves, is very easy and that it is cocktail parties every evening.

Since coming to Ottawa, and especially these last two weeks, I have not had time to go to cocktail parties; I have only had time to read through agreements one-foot thick in order to analyse them very quickly.

I think I can say that I have learned to appreciate the complexity of the issues. For instance, since aboriginal issues are a federal matter, and being a member of a sovereigntist party, I have always adhered to the principle that we have two nations in Canada, Quebec and the rest of Canada. My point is that Quebec and Canada sometimes have different ways of approaching the issues.

As a critic for the Official Opposition in a federal Parliament and as a member of the sovereigntist party, one has to be very diligent to ensure that one's positions are implemented. I am delighted to see that Quebec has led the way in this respect. The hon. member made this point earlier with respect to James Bay and the Northeastern Quebec Agreement—the Cree and the Naskapis—and I think this is a first in Canada. We led the way, and this fact has given me some very important tools. The issues are also complex because within the territory occupied by these two nations, there are about 600 native bands, each with its own identity.

• (1830)

The word complex applies not only to the relations between two nations and the 600 native bands in Canada. Especially in Quebec, the situation is extremely difficult with regard to the aboriginal question. Extremely difficult, because unfortunately, we have tremendous problems with some of the reserves. I think the federal government is not doing everything it should to resolve these problems. My point is that the situation is not an