

difficulty with some of the issues related to the agreement in principle on land claims, yet the Minister of Indian Affairs has held them at the December 31 date for ratification. This made it impossible for them to reach any agreement on the outstanding issues. Now the Minister has terminated negotiations and ended funding for the CYI. Is the Government prepared to act in a mood of good will and flexibility, reconsider its decision, reopen negotiations with the Yukon Indians, and work toward a just and mutually satisfactory agreement on their land claims?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development I think it is important in this sensitive issue that it be very clearly understood on the record what the Minister has said and what he is prepared to do, rather than the flavour or the face of the Hon. Member's question.

I have no objection to quoting from a letter which has been made public. It was addressed to Mr. Harry Allen, Chairman of the Council for Yukon Indians. It was written by the Minister of Indian Affairs. If I might have the time of the House, the Minister made three salient points in that letter—first, that he would seek authority so that the elders program would continue; second, that he would continue the current informal arrangements; and, third, that with regard to funding for the Council for Yukon Indians, any existing federal commitments in this fiscal year to CYI would, of course, be honoured.

CONDUCT OF NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, the negotiations have been terminated and future funding has been cut off. If the Government is not prepared to deal with the Council for Yukon Indians in an open, flexible, and honest manner, how can aboriginal peoples in any part of Canada put any confidence in the so-called review of land claims policy which the Minister announced, or in any other action of the Minister?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, back in 1979 there were no negotiations. In an open, honest, and forthright manner, those negotiations were put together. That is the manner in which the present Minister of Indian Affairs and this Government are operating. Nothing has changed from those principles.

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DISARMAMENT

STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO MINISTER

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri-Westmount): Mr. Speaker, on the subject of peace, I should first like to congratulate the Prime Minister on two appointments—Ambassador Roche and, more recently, Geoffrey Pearson. Unfortunately he has a loose cannon running the Department of National

Defence, Canada's very own Archie Bunker, it would appear. This week, or late last week, he cast aspersions on the men and women in the Canadian peace movement by saying, in a speech in Winnipeg, that the movement was weak and that that was "right and proper". Then he apparently went on to applaud the locking up of certain protesters in Nova Scotia.

I want to give the Prime Minister the opportunity to denounce these stupid and irresponsible statements by the Minister, and to apologize to those dedicated men and women across this country who have been working tirelessly to give concrete leadership to establishing peace and good will for men and women in the world.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I regret the comment of my hon. friend who has characterized the Minister of National Defence in that way. The Minister has been an honourable Member of this House for almost 28 years. I think he has contributed greatly to his country—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney:—and I regret the comment.

● (1140)

With regard to any activities undertaken by groups interested in promoting the cause of peace, I have had the opportunity of meeting with the Bishops, and on previous occasions with groups of peace activists. What I have indicated to them is this. I urged them strongly to maintain the pressure at all times. Most times it does not accord with government policy, but so be it, because the pressure of honourable people working for the pursuit of peace is the strongest assurance that a democracy is healthy. I welcome it. I encourage them at all times, because nothing is more noble than citizens working for the cause of peace. I encourage them, and I assure them that they will always receive a welcome and hospitable reception at the office of the Prime Minister of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri-Westmount): Mr. Speaker, I understood the Prime Minister to say that the efforts of the peace movement do not correspond to government policy, which I must say I find very disturbing. I will look at the "blues", but that is what I understood him to say. Instead of regretting—

Mr. Speaker: With respect, I must ask the Hon. Member to come to his question.

Mr. Johnston: Instead of regretting my statements, would he not regret the statement of his own Minister who has cast aspersions on the motives and the efforts of these people in the Canadian peace movement?