

*Government Orders*

realized that old expression "out of sight, out of mind" reflected what has been going for many years with many of our First Nations communities.

As I mentioned, the members from the eastern and western Arctic urged us on and we as a caucus and now as a government are fully participating in ensuring the realization of some of those priorities which interest the First Nations are becoming legislation.

It is also a tribute to the government, specifically to the minister responsible for Indian and northern affairs. As one of our members mentioned earlier, some of these issues have been on the books for over 100 years. We just keep putting these treaties aside. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development probably had to twist some arms, because this has always been a tough issue to get on the front burner and get to the point where it becomes legislation on the floor of the House.

• (1700)

Today we can celebrate. Maybe there are some members in the opposition who do not like the process that is evolving as we get the issue resolved, but I am happy to hear that in spirit they are essentially supportive of the legislation. I think that is fair ball. There is always room for improving the process in this place.

At times it strikes me as funny that the Reform Party tends to come from a background where they want less government, less red tape, and the activity around this particular bill has been that. A lot of entrepreneurial people from all levels of government and all sectors of the economy have worked together in a very constructive way. They have worked expeditiously, and now when they seem to be getting some real results the Reform Party is saying hold on a minute, we are getting a little head of ourselves; let us not be too efficient here, because we have to make sure that the MPs ratify this and place the seal of Parliament on it before we confirm or negotiate transactions.

The Reform Party should know that all of those discussions and activities and exploration that have taken place are really conditional upon the work in the House. The Reform Party should not get too upset about the process, as long as in the end we get this resolved. I think that is where we are all coming from.

I have worked over the last six years with my colleague from the Western Arctic, who has made me as a city member of Parliament much more aware of some of the difficulties some of our first peoples are having trying to get their dreams, policies, and objectives resolved. I believe all members would agree that our member for the Western Arctic has been very passionate about making sure that her communities and her people have been represented in this Parliament over the last six years.

On behalf of my constituents in downtown Toronto, we support the government on this bill. We hope that our first

peoples, with the help of this bill, will realize a good part of the dream they have been working on for so many years.

[Translation]

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in today's debate on a bill respecting the establishment of the British Columbia Treaty Commission.

I should start by congratulating the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie, the hon. Minister of Indian Affairs, for succeeding in bringing this matter before the House, a very difficult task because of the full parliamentary calendar, and in convincing us all of the importance of this bill because it is indeed a very significant bill.

I see that some of the members across the way do not share my opinion but this is nonetheless what I think about the whole issue.

• (1705)

In May 1991, the Government of British Columbia made a commitment to ensure that the province would pay its fair share in the settlement of the land claims in question.

In June 1991, the provincial minister of aboriginal affairs announced the approval in principle of the establishment of a treaty commission in charge of co-ordinating the start of land claim negotiations, as recommended by the task force that had been set up for this purpose and whose members included representatives of the various levels of government.

In November 1991, the federal minister of the day, the hon. Tom Siddon as you may recall, approved 19 of the recommendations in the task force's report.

In December 1991, the Premier of British Columbia, Mike Harcourt, and the provincial minister of aboriginal affairs, Andrew Petter, approved the task force's recommendations regarding the land claims in B.C.

In the next 10 months, representatives of Canada, British Columbia and the summit negotiated the agreement on establishing the British Columbia Treaty Commission. The agreement on the BCTC specifies the commission's role, membership, financing, location, duties, powers, decisions, immunity, mandate and reviews.

On September 21, 1992, the Government of Canada, then represented by Prime Minister Mulroney and Minister of Indian Affairs Tom Siddon, the Government of British Columbia, represented by Premier Mike Harcourt and Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Andrew Petter, and the leaders of the First Nations summit formally approved the commission's constitution by signing the agreement on the British Columbia Treaty Commission.