

James Bay Agreement

I am glad to see this legislation today. I do not want to slow down proceedings. I hope we can pass this legislation, as we have promised, in the next short while.

[Translation]

Mr. René Gingras (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I am particularly anxious to say a few words about the Bill before the House this afternoon, because this legislation affects the Cree in my riding.

First of all, I would like to say it gives me great satisfaction to be working as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Munro).

With great enthusiasm—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Parliamentary Secretary will forgive me but—

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I should have informed the House that if the Parliamentary Secretary speaks at this time, he closes debate on second reading.

Mr. McDermid: Mr. Speaker, we basically agreed that we would have one speaker per Party. The Parliamentary Secretary has committed himself to giving a very short speech. I know the Cree and Naskapi are in his riding and that he is very interested in this legislation. That is fine with us and we will proceed to Committee of the Whole when he finishes, which I hope will be very soon because we do have some questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Gingras: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is right, but I would not wish to close the debate before taking these few moments to say that I appreciate the work that has been done on all sides of the House, and especially the work done by the Minister. I would like to stress particularly the work done by two great chiefs, Joe Guanish and my friend Billy Diamond, who represent the Cree in my riding.

We are writing a new page in the history of our country. I am very pleased to be among those who will have helped to give the native people in my riding more justice and equity.

So as not to delay the debate any further, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say, in concluding, that I thank the Chair and the Opposition for allowing me to say a few words in connection with this Bill.

● (1430)

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, Bill read the second time and, by unanimous consent, the House went into committee thereon, Mr. Corbin in the chair.

Mr. McDermid: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. Rather than go through the Bill clause by clause, since we have some 218 clauses and just going through them could keep us here all weekend, perhaps we could have the unanimous consent of the House to discuss the Bill under Clause 2. If this is permissible and we obtain the unanimous agreement of the Committee of the Whole, we could cover all aspects of the Bill and then approve it on a total basis. Would that meet with the approval of the committee?

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Chairman, I think that is a wise suggestion. I understood that we would not debate it at this stage, after the three speakers, but perhaps the division on Clause 2 could apply to all other clauses in the Bill. Perhaps we could agree to that and that would solve the problem.

Mr. McDermid: That is the same thing.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Chairman, I am always very cognizant of what the Government House Leader says. My ears perk up whenever he makes a statement. I listen carefully and I want to make sure that the record is straight and clear. Certainly, if there was ever any undertaking given about not speaking during the course of committee stage, it never came from my lips. We had intended to ask certain questions. It is a very voluminous Bill, but we will pass all stages this afternoon. It was always contemplated and intended that we would have some questions and answers, especially since the Minister is present. It is a pleasure to see him back for a day.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Thank you.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: We thought that during the course of the afternoon we would be able to ask a few questions, with the benefit of senior officials from the Department. However, I can assure the Government House Leader that we will expedite the passage of the Bill and that this matter will be dealt with today.

Mr. Pinard: I think that is fair. I never intended to muzzle my hon. colleague. I always like to hear him sing on Friday afternoon. Nevertheless, my proposal could still apply.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Absolutely.

Mr. McDermid: Yes.

Mr. Pinard: Questions could be asked on Clause 2 and once the division has taken place on that clause, the same vote could apply to the other clauses of the Bill. We could discuss the Bill under Clause 2, that would be fine. Once again, I never intended to prevent Hon. Members from asking questions, except I understood that one speaker per Party would be enough. Provided we have the Bill passed this afternoon, it is fine with me.