

*Government Orders*

parents, lived among the Mohawk people for four years. Her sisters and brothers went to school there with all their schoolmates being of the Caughnawaga Mohawk people. What she understood from that and as conveyed to me over the years, is that the use of their own language was essential for their identity, their self-respect and their survival for what they think they are, one of the first nations of Canada.

**An hon. member:** In that they are the same as us.

**Mr. Heap:** My colleague has said that in that they are the same as us. Certainly, as a person of English language origin I feel a very strong need to maintain the English language, but I do not feel it is threatened at the present time.

What has changed to some extent recently and what has impressed me this year is the very strong drive for determination of Canada's First Nations to control their own culture. Sometimes this gets into a discussion of words such as sovereignty, and people wonder if it means control of the army and so on. That is not before us today. There is nothing being proposed by the First Nations in this matter and nothing being proposed by the amendment by the hon. member for Vancouver East that in any way challenges or threatens the responsibility and authority of the existing governments of Canada. Rather, it is the opposite. What many Canadians are now beginning to learn and realize is that it was not properly presented when we went to school 30, 40 or 50 years ago in our Canadian history.

Over two centuries ago, King George III made a solemn agreement with some of the First Nations which has been applied to many of the others, that there would be a fiduciary responsibility, or an obligation to act positively on behalf of the First Nations. This would mean a legal obligation to consult the First Nations when the Government of Canada or any of its subordinate governments is initiating some change in its programs that might affect them. This was an undertaking which is still an obligation to this day of the Government of Canada and the governments of the provinces. It is an obligation which has been grossly neglected or even denied far too often in past years.

When the government talks about the rule of law and law being applicable to everyone in Canada, with no one having the right to take the law into his own hands, it is very unfortunate to see the government doing exactly what it says no one can do, that is, simply abrogating its responsibility in this sense of consulting the First Nations before doing something that would affect the teaching of their language.

Therefore, I believe it would be a small evidence of good faith if the government would listen to the request of the First Nations on this point. These evidences are needed. We heard a speech by the Prime Minister promising to do all sorts of wonderful things for the First Nations if a small band of people at Kanesatake would simply lay down their arms. They have laid down their arms. They are now in the custody, that is those of them who were sought for custody, of the authorities recognized by this government. Now is the time for this government to show its good faith and give unanimous consent. We have heard from the official opposition, the Liberal Party. We now wish to have unanimous consent completed by the government.

In light of the Prime Minister's promises of a few days ago, I ask that the control of the teaching of the aboriginal languages be left with the aboriginal people, to be carried on in co-operation with the Canadian government on a consultative basis, and not to be handed to the bureaucrats of some institution that is now to be created so that may do what they please about aboriginal languages. The aboriginal peoples will have no recognized right in the minds of those bureaucrats to any say in what is done.

Please recognize the kind of desperation that is reflected in the words and in the actions of the First Nations at this time. They feel they are faced with extinction, as has been pointed out in the letter read by the hon. member for Vancouver East. Recognize that and do not exasperate them further. Do not exacerbate their fears further by this quite unnecessary insistence that if the government's appointed officials in this heritage language institution wish to do something or other with the aboriginal languages, they are free to do it. Please respect the rights granted two centuries ago by the King of England, then an authority of this land, and the promises so grandly made by the Prime Minister only a few days ago.