

*Government Orders*

these houses were often all identical and that the aboriginal culture was not taken into consideration.

It is important to them to ensure their development while also affirming their cultural identity. I think you will see a major change in the way native people will do things in the Yukon. I believe they will give us quite a demonstration. I am anxious to go back there and see how things will have changed in a few years. I hope that by then Quebec will be an independent country. However, it will still be possible to go to the Yukon because we have no intention of building a Berlin wall between Quebec and the rest of Canada. I will always be happy to visit the Yukon, look at the new way of doing things and see how these people will have taken control of their destiny and ensured that their culture is reflected in the decisions they will make.

This legislation puts an end to the uncertainty regarding territorial rights, land titles, cutting rights as well as mining rights.

• (1720)

Indeed, there was a great deal of uncertainty before, but things will finally be settled.

Negotiations lasted 21 years and surface rights had to be established to confirm ownership and rights over usable land. I briefly alluded to this earlier and I do not think it is necessary to go over that again.

Bill C-55 proposes the establishment of a board having jurisdiction to settle disputes. I also mentioned that point earlier and I made a comparison with Split Lake, where no such board exists and where arbitration problems are mounting. If such a board was established there, a large number of disputes would be settled without having to go before the courts. This is an original idea that will also save a lot of money to a lot of people.

Given the current state of public finances, it is very important to make good use of our money. I believe that this board will result in savings, considering the legal costs generated by all those endless disputes which would often end up in the Supreme Court. These people would rather settle things differently, more or less by consensus, which is the way democracy works. The board, through its membership, and I will come back to this later on, will solve these disputes.

It will be a last resort and it will represent a true transfer of jurisdiction to the first nations.

I want to say a little more on the housing and health issues, and also discuss infrastructures. We know that the government has spent a lot of money on infrastructure. I have personally visited several reserves and, as I mentioned yesterday in this House, I was stunned to see how dilapidated housing on the

reserve is, but also that a large number of houses have no water system, no sewer and no running water. In Canada, we boast about our remarkable quality of life. But we tolerate these things, which only go to show that the Indian Act provides no solution at all. We boast about the remarkable quality of life in Canada, but the native people are living in what I consider Third World conditions.

With this kind of bill, and bills like C-33, C-34 and C-55, people will be able to invest their own resources in whatever basic infrastructure projects that might meet their own needs. This is not only a step in the right direction, but also the way to nip the problem in the bud.

I will now turn to the membership of the board, because I see that the private members' hour is coming up soon. The board will be made up of 3 to 11 members. What is original here is that the native people will have their say in the appointment of these board members. Since we are giving natives a land base and granting them self-government, it would be a bit silly to seize the very first opportunity we have to set up a board and appoint only white people. Of course, in Yukon, the majority of the board members will be natives. I think this is an adequate compromise. Half of the board members will be natives appointed by natives.

It is equally important that the people making up the other part of the committee also come from the Yukon. Personally, I have a good knowledge of native affairs, but I would feel very uneasy if the minister or the government chose me to sit on the Yukon committee. It would be ill advised on my part to say that I know that community and that I want them to benefit from my great wisdom. I think that the days when Ottawa could impose its wisdom on the regions and on the native communities are over and I think that the bill before us reflects a desire to help the First Nations take their own destiny in hand. Therefore, there must be a native component in all of the various committees so that the policies and the plans of the First Nations are reflected in reality and that the natives are free to take the directions they want.

• (1725)

I would be remiss if, before concluding briefly, I did not also mention Quebec's experience. I believe that Quebec's experience, notably the James Bay Convention, somehow sets a standard. I say this every time the issue of self-government comes up, and I say it again: I believe that the James Bay Convention set a standard which truly serves as a model elsewhere in Canada.

So I think it was very interesting in this regard. I would be remiss if, every time we have an opportunity to talk about self-government, I did not mention it, because that convention