

Supply

Listen to George Erasmus, one of the leading aboriginal chiefs in this country. He said:

What we are after is power where it is possible and in as many cases as is logical and reasonable for the First Nations to control their own lives without influence.

Listen to Dorothy Wasbiska, Vice-President of the Native Council of Canada. She said:

Self-government includes the right to have a meaningful say in our day-to-day lives.

Even more recently, John Amagoalik, Co-Chairman of the Inuit Committee on National Issues speaking before the Standing Committee said:

The vision of aboriginal self-government is one that sees aboriginal peoples maintaining their own distinctiveness by running as many of their own affairs as is practicable in a modern, culturally diverse and inter-dependent federal state. In my view, this is a vision that can be shared by most of the political leaders taking part in the upcoming conference.

I have only just begun my remarks but you are already signally me that my time has expired, Mr. Speaker. I cannot believe time has gone that quickly. Let me conclude by introducing just a very brief international note in the hope that it will be of some guidance and inspiration to our leaders at the First Ministers Conference at the end of this month.

Since 1982 there has been a United Nations working group on indigenous populations meeting once a year in Geneva to formulate standards for the treatment of indigenous populations. In 1985 Madam Erica Daes, Chairperson of this working group, speaking in Quebec City said that in her opinion:

—the principle of the self-determination of peoples applied also to indigenous populations, although it did not include the right of secession.

I have attended many international gatherings where indigenous populations were being discussed and the latter part of that remark has never ever been an issue. It is not a question of secession. More accurately, and I conclude on this point, what we are talking about was well expressed I think by Thomas R. Berger in his report of the Alaska Native Review Commission, *Village Journey*, that I recommend to Hon. Members. He writes:

If governments continue in their efforts to force native societies into moulds that we have cast, I believe they will continue to fail. No tidy bureaucratic plan of action for native people can have any chance of success unless it takes into account the determination of natives peoples to remain themselves. Their determination to retain their own cultures and their own lands does not mean they wish to return to the past, it means they refuse to let their future be dictated by others.

Mr. Gormley: Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the Hon. Member for Cochrane—Superior (Mr. Penner). I have a question on the area of self-government. It has been a fundamental premise of those who have dealt with native communities, particularly the case of this Government and our present Minister when dealing with Indian communities and native groups, that one respect their aims and aspirations, that we do not dictate or force or pressure anything upon them. I know in discussions on self-government, for example, that we have been dealing at the pace which the individual native

communities have established for themselves in these discussions. I know the Hon. Member knows about the signing, for example, of the historic self-government agreement already in place in two provinces and working on a negotiated basis in other areas.

I find it interesting that the Hon. Member would perhaps criticize the Government about pace and direction. Is the Hon. Member suggesting that the Government set the pace and direction, as was done in the past by many Liberal Governments? Or is he suggesting that we continue as we are, which is respecting the integrity and the pace of the native communities which they themselves have set?

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member makes a valid point with respect to pace. Yes, the pace must be determined by aboriginal communities and the various aboriginal groupings that want to enter into negotiations leading to self-government agreements. Certainly the pace must be theirs. The problem is not who will determine the pace, the difficulty is putting in place the process, of getting the process going. There are two ways in which you can do it, broadly speaking. One is the process that the Department of Indian Affairs, of community-based self-government, is presently launching. It is not totally unsatisfactory. It is not totally unacceptable by any means. There has been some progress in that direction.

I am suggesting to the House, and the aboriginal leaders in the country more importantly are suggesting to the country, that what is required in order to move this forward more rapidly, to get negotiations going, is a constitutional imperative, but this will be the driving force to get the negotiations going. I suggest that if we are to follow the pace that the Department has in mind, it will be a very slow one indeed. It may be as much as a century before the aboriginal communities of Canada enjoy self-government. We need something more to motivate governments and aboriginal communities to sit down at the negotiating table. I suggest what is needed is that constitutional recognition of the right, which would then act as the imperative desperately needed at the present time.

• (1630)

Mr. Redway: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. friend, having joined him the other day at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Rights. At that time, we heard a witness from the Department who gave evidence on the question of the comprehensive land claims settlement policy.

Today the Hon. Member has been speaking of moving the self-government process forward and of motivating people to get going. Certainly his comments with respect to some form of entrenchment in the Constitution are comments with which the Government agrees. That process is under way at the present time.

As I recall, throughout the spring and early summer of 1986, native people across Canada were hailing a report that