

many of the other programs which are dealt with can be settled satisfactorily Unless this is mutually agreeable, the perpetuation of the difficulties will go on.

An amount of \$50 million has been announced as being available for the development of the Indian people. I would caution anyone about accepting this at its face value because, as the minister knows, \$50 million over a five year period is not a very large amount of money in any event. His predecessor in office a few years ago announced a \$112 million five year housing program. This was fine on paper, but the previous minister of finance got hold of that \$112 million program and, because of subsequent budgetary matters, sliced it until the \$112 million program did not exist. Unless the minister can guarantee absolutely that he has this money to be used for this purpose over the next five years it is a meaningless declaration, because any minister of finance in any subsequent budgetary year can stretch it, reduce it or cut back on it.

The policy statement is a step in the right direction, but the old adage of the proof of the pudding being in the eating is applicable here. I think the success of this program depends upon two factors: It depends upon the continued acceptance by the government of the views of the native Indian people themselves because they are of primary importance; it also depends upon the speed with which the government puts into effect those accepted views.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I should like also to thank most sincerely the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for sending us, a little beforehand, a copy of the statement we have just heard with pleasure, so that we could study it briefly.

We are glad that the federal government is willing to transfer its administrative powers to the provinces since we have been requesting for a long time that the Indians be recognized as true Canadians and I feel that the federal government is now taking an important step in that direction.

After having for a long time attempted to administer Indian affairs, the federal government now realizes its helplessness, its incompetence and it is now asking the provinces to see to the administration of the affairs of Canada's first inhabitants.

Committee Consideration of Interest Rates

I do not know how far those negotiations between the provincial and federal governments concerning the transfer of powers have progressed, but I would ask the minister and the government to be quite firm during the negotiations, in order that the Indians may obtain all the rights to which they are entitled.

I have reason to believe that some Indian bands are not too satisfied with the administration of a certain province, and we should be assured that the transfer of funds proposed by the minister would really be used for the administration of Indian affairs and not to fill gaps in provincial budgets. Therefore, I ask the minister to see to it that the funds transferred to the provinces will be used for the administration of Indian affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the decision of liquidating Indian affairs at the federal level will benefit the Indians, so that they may become real Canadians, acquire the same rights and privileges as other Canadians, and have the opportunity to improve themselves, to get an education and to own something, according to their initiative, competence and wishes.

• (2:30 p.m.)

[English]

FINANCE, TRADE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

AGREEMENT THAT INTEREST RATES BE CONSIDERED BY STANDING COMMITTEE

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions about the suggestion of my colleague, the Minister of Finance, to refer the question of interest rates to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs. If the house would give its consent I wonder whether the following could be made an order of the house:

That the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs be empowered to consider the present level of interest rates in Canada and their relation both to rates in other countries and to economic conditions in Canada and elsewhere.

If there is unanimous agreement perhaps that could be made an order of the house.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members have heard the suggestion proposed by the hon. President of the Privy Council. Is it so agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: It is so ordered.