

*Government Orders*

exceeding those of municipal governments. I am sorry, but they were here first. They are more than municipal governments.

In our parliamentary guide, we in the Bloc Québécois say that these people are entitled to self-government. They are nations, just as there is a Quebec nation, an Anglo-Saxon nation, an Acadian nation; there are native nations and it is important to point that out.

The previous speaker said that he was afraid for his fishing and hunting rights. We can all say that the arrival of Europeans here upset their hunting and fishing rights as well. It is the wrong approach to say that reviewing the rules of the game will prevent us from hunting and fishing in the Yukon. I myself have gone there and I invite the hon. member to go there too.

I was taken fishing. It did not prevent me from being very well received on native territory. I could well have been told that those resources belong to the native people and that I was not welcome. On the contrary. As we have seen over the centuries, native people know how to share and I was glad to be invited to go and fish there. I think that fishing and hunting rights will be maintained.

I also heard Reformers call them spoiled children. I heard the Reform Party compare them to people on southern islands. I gave you some statistics and opinions a while ago: that is false. People who live near the 60th parallel are not vacationers. They are not on a holiday, when you realize that unemployment is 50 per cent. People on holiday do not care about the unemployment rate, they can afford a trip south.

Many of these people cannot afford as much and I think that the kind of example put forward by the Reform Party does not help the debate. I admit that there may be reasons or financial arguments but it is harder for me to accept arguments based on mistrust of native people.

On Bill C-55 as such, what is interesting in this bill is that a board is created to settle disputes. Settling disputes is important because there are issues involving trappers and mining and forestry companies. These people will certainly have disputes at some point. Bill C-55 will give the native people, who will be well represented on the board, a means to settle such disputes. It is much better than what we have in the rest of Canada. I think that the failures elsewhere in Canada must have inspired the bill now before us.

• (1735)

The example of Split Lake comes to mind. Indeed, even if an agreement was reached with one of the nations, the whole water system of that part of the country was affected and these people have practically no recourse, except arbitration. If there was a

board located closer to them, such disputes would be solved much more quickly.

The Bloc Québécois will pursue its work in committee. Obviously, we support Bill C-55, although there may be room for improvement regarding certain provisions. We will do our work seriously. We will review the bill and we will examine it more in detail at the committee level. At this stage, the Bloc Québécois can only support that legislation. After all, we made speeches to support these people in Yukon who, for generations, put all their hopes in a successful negotiation process, before finally seeing their dream come true in the last session of this Parliament. Under the circumstances, it would be very inconsistent to now oppose Bill C-55.

I want to say that both myself and my Bloc colleagues have confidence in native people. We do recognize, for example, that they were the first ones here, that they deserve more respect, and that they should have full control of their destiny. And to recognize those things implies a great deal of confidence. But we do have total confidence in native people.

Programs which, until now, were run in Ottawa will now be administered much closer to native communities, and I hope to never again hear negative, if not nasty, comments about natives. These people follow the debates of the House of Commons and I think that they sometimes have a wrong impression of parliamentary democracy. Their own approach is based on reaching a consensus but, more importantly, they are guided by a profound need for respect.

I am among those who have the greatest respect for native people. I do recognize that they were subjected to many injustices and these have to be corrected. The previous bills corrected those injustices, and Bill C-55 will confirm the autonomy of 14 First Nations in Yukon. Four of them have reached agreements, while ten others are in the process of doing so. They will be heading for self-government and I know they will take care of their communities, because I trust them on this issue.

I think the federal government will be able to save some money by granting the native people a land base that will help them grow and become much more self-sufficient.

Of course, since I am from Quebec and well-versed in independence issues, I fully understand why a First Nation or some First Nations would want their independence, and this is why we are extremely pleased to support Bill C-55, although we will want to clean up the legislation to ensure that the bill reflects our vision. As far as the substance of the bill is concerned, we think that self-government for the people in Yukon and elsewhere is very important and we are pleased to tell the Yukon residents who are watching us, the native peoples in Yukon, that the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-55.