

Indian Bands Claims Settlement

and all of those who have made this the success it is. I wish them well in the future.

The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development mentioned that there were many symbols developed by the Sechelt people. He mentioned a Sechelt T-shirt which says: "C-93 will make us free". With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, this T-shirt says: "The Sechelt is free of the Indian Act", and I would wish the Minister to have it.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member knows why I must interrupt at this point.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say a couple of words, but not to repeat what other Hon. Members have said. As Chairman of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, I want to congratulate the Minister and his Department for the manner in which they put the Bill together, the Government of British Columbia for the manner in which it has co-operated on this project, and the standing committee which worked on this matter for some time.

I can recall the Special Committee on Indian Self-Government. The Sechelt people appeared before us some years ago and put forward an excellent plan which has been carried out fairly today. I want to thank the members of the committee for putting forward a first-class piece of legislation for the Sechelt people. I wish the Sechelt people well.

● (1720)

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to and Bill read the third time and passed.

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GRASSY NARROWS AND ISLINGTON INDIAN BANDS MERCURY POLLUTION CLAIMS SETTLEMENT ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. David Crombie (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) moved that Bill C-110, an Act to approve, give effect to and declare valid certain agreements between the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, Reed Inc., Great Lakes Forest Products Ltd., the Islington Indian Band and the Grassy Narrows Indian Band, be read the second time and, by unanimous consent, referred to the Committee of the Whole.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would again like to thank Members of the House. I would like to thank you as well, Mr. Speaker, for your fast-track approach. You should be negotiating with the Americans.

Bill C-110 deals with a matter which, as some people know and remember, has been around for years and years. I guess it has been around in the order of about 15 or 17 years.

Mr. Penner: Sixteen years.

Mr. Crombie: Sixteen years.

We arrived at the essentials of an arrangement between the Grassy Narrows Indian Band, Whitedog, the corporations and the Province of Ontario last fall. Since that time we have been trying to ensure that the arrangement stays together, if I can put it that way. There are a number of people who have significantly contributed to this arrangement, not the least of whom was Mr. Justice Emmett Hall, now retired but still going strong, who is so good at these matters. It also took the act of support of opposition Parties and, in particular, their northern members.

I might say that in a sense this brings to a close a very sad and bad chapter in this province's history with respect to native people. Indeed, it spawned a number of essays and a number of books. It taught many people something which we perhaps too often forget; that is, that native people live in a world which is sometimes not clearly understood by non-Indian people. We tend not to spend enough time trying to learn about it. Perhaps I should not make such a comment at the second reading stage of this Bill, but on the weekend when I was dealing with the matter in Winisk I noticed that it did not receive nearly the attention it should have received even though there was a loss of life, one person missing, and an entire community of 125 people destroyed. The matter was sort of put into seventh place in the news. In a sense the legacy of Grassy Narrows and Whitedog is still with us.

In conclusion, this is the last page of the bad old way on the matter of Grassy Narrows and Whitedog. Hopefully, it is the first page as well for a new future for both these bands. Anyone who has had experience with the episode of the mercury poisoning in the English and Wabigoon Rivers and how it affected those communities will know that, in a way, we will never be able to rectify what was done. This is at least a small way in which to begin a future with a new generation of people in these two communities.

I wish to thank again those who have given their consent for this matter to go ahead today. I welcome the comments of others.

Finally, I wish to say that the negotiations were difficult but the next 20 years will be the most difficult for these communities. I hope that the arrangements we have made will be sufficient for the task.

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, in commenting briefly on Bill C-110 I would like to say to Hon. Members who are concerned that a Bill of this nature is to go through all stages in a relatively short period of time that they should be aware that what we are in fact doing today is ratifying an agreement. We are validating a settlement which will confer benefits on people who have suffered terribly