

*Private Members' Business*

When the hon. member who spoke last said that the contributions of the aboriginal people cannot be underestimated, it is very true. I do not know why we say contributions to the people of Canada because it should not be regarded as that. It should be regarded as the things that aboriginal people have done on behalf of Canada.

Just last month the Inuit of the Eastern Arctic agreed to give to the Government of Canada 82 per cent of Nunavut, or 660,000 square miles, so the Government of Canada can have certainty over the land that it thinks it owns.

When we are talking about recognizing the contributions of the aboriginal people, we have to make some concrete decisions as to what we should recognize, acknowledge exactly what the aboriginal people have done. The government and other organizations should instantly recognize, by making available some things to the aboriginal people, rather than just through gestures like the recognition of the day. I can give some examples.

The Government of Canada just cut the CMHC housing on reserves to the point where aboriginal housing is in dire straits. It already was in dire straits and now it is in even worse condition. The government should immediately go back to pre-1991 funding from CMHC for aboriginal housing.

The people of Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay who were moved to those communities from northern Quebec have been asking for recognition, an apology, as well as \$10 million to help them. The government moved these people to help maintain sovereignty over the Canadian Arctic. It should immediately move to do those things for the people of Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay.

The government should immediately move to counter the kind of ads which the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the anti-fur movement and the animal rights groups are putting out. The government should immediately counter those attacks.

One of the more bitter legacies of the last 300 to 500 years is the lack of spirituality issue and morale of the aboriginal people in Canada. If people had looked at the newspapers in the last few days they would have seen that in a particular community, Big Cove, New Brunswick, 75 native people, aboriginal people, have attempted suicide in the last year. People must wonder why these young people, most of whom are young men, are killing themselves. It is the despair on the reserves

and the despair in the communities that are causing this. There should be a move by the government to do something about those matters. It is not a case of more money. It is a case of recognizing that these people have something to offer and maybe what they have to offer can help them get out of the deep despair a lot of communities and a lot of reserves are in.

• (1130)

These are only words. The government has not done the kind of work it should be doing. It should be countering all the things plaguing us today. The government can also do an awful lot for the aboriginal people of Canada by doing things like appointing qualified people. We have a lot of problems with the justice system that has been introduced or that we have had to live with for hundreds of years.

The government should move to appoint people like Judge Igloliorte from Labrador, Justice Sinclair from Manitoba or even the hon. member for Wetaskiwin to the Supreme Court. It should show its commitment to bettering the lives of aboriginal people by doing these things. It should do these things to ensure that the aboriginal people feel very much a part of Canada. It should do the things aboriginal people have been telling them to do, such as doing more for the environment and more about the land claims issues.

Still today the Government of Canada has an extinguishment policy where it asks all aboriginal people who will be negotiating comprehensive claims to extinguish their title to the land before they even sit down to negotiate.

It should do something about recognizing the languages and cultures of aboriginal people. There are 53 different aboriginal languages in Canada, yet not one of them is recognized nationally. Territorially we have seven aboriginal languages recognized in the Northwest Territories, but not one of them is recognized nationally.

It is a nice gesture but the government and other groups should make every day a day to honour the aboriginal people of Canada, the people who were here to welcome Christopher Columbus when he took a wrong turn trying to get to India. The government could show its commitment by telling the people of Canada that every day is a day to honour the aboriginal people of Canada. Every day is a day to recognize the contributions of the aboriginal people of Canada.