

Indian Affairs

Sainte-Scholastique Airport and once again, we have been paying.

If land is needed to build hydroelectric plants, we must pay. Let us expropriate, fair enough, but the land should be paid for. Perhaps the land is not as expansive as in other more developed areas but in view of the huge territory which we propose to take from the Indians, I think they should be adequately compensated.

In the February 1972 issue of *Le Québec Industriel*, it is reported and I quote:

The James Bay area is a huge territory whose southern limits are some 300 miles from Montreal and the northern limits over 800 miles away. More precisely, the area extends westward to the Ontario border, southward to the 49th parallel, northward to the 55th parallel and eastward to the highwater line separating the Hudson Bay basins from those of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Its longest east-west dimension exceeds 400 miles. The total area of this region is about 125,000 square miles or almost one fifth of the whole province or again more than the four Maritime provinces put together.

And this is only a small part of the federal constituency of Abitibi.

It is all that territory, 125,000 square miles, that is being hit, that the Quebec government expropriated to create under Bill 50 that huge municipality known as the James Bay municipality and which includes the towns of Chibougamau, Chapais, Matagami, Joutel and in the western corner the rural municipalities of Villevois, Val Paradis and Beaucanton; the municipality covers the whole basin to be used for that hydroelectric development.

Mr. Speaker, it is all that territory that is being taken away in one shot from the Indians living in that area. Some say that they are not numerous, roughly 6,000, but that territory is important to them. They own it by right. It is theirs. It is obvious that the project is important but as I said a while ago the Indians know quite well that they will not be able to, and they do not want to, stop that development. But since that territory is theirs they want to benefit from it and I agree with them on that.

In the daily *La Frontière* of September 25, 1968, there was an article by André Dionne. It is a very interesting article. It deals with the claims of the Indians and there is even concern because it is thought that Indians will claim more and take action to have their rights asserted. It is not known exactly how far that could go. I quote from the paper:

The vast movement of conscience which characterizes the Indian people of Canada will soon give rise to claims they consider essential to their survival.

Talking only about those living in Quebec, they will very soon submit claims to the government of Quebec—

That was written in 1968, it was already started. It goes on to say:

Those territories are so vast in the province of Quebec alone that a very summary and partial assessment could run up to \$4 billion.

That is about the amount Chief Max Gros-Louis put forward not too long ago.

It goes on to say:

The Quebec Indian Association which represents most of the 26,000 Indians of Quebec regards land rights as basic rights. Thus, it is the first stage.

[Mr. Laprise.]

To this end, the Indians have prepared the draft of a brief to be presented soon to the government of Quebec.

Through these negotiations, the Indians can get fair compensation for all the territories which have been taken from them since the 1760 Capitulation, as well as some other rights linked to territories and also for some territories which are not occupied.

During the conquest, French people held only a strip of land along the St. Lawrence valley. The rest of the Quebec territory was held by Indians who owned it, except for the northern part which was held by Eskimos.

On these Indian territories, white men exploit the most important natural resources, namely mines and forests.

The legal aspect.

One of the first arguments and probably the most basic: aboriginal rights.

Legal documents state that aboriginal rights are real rights; moreover, it is a right to the land, a right which confers Indians a legal title.

A second legal text reveals that the Indians or native people undoubtedly owned by right a real territory (real property) in the public and private meaning of the word.

Moreover, these territories were "occupied" in the legal meaning of the word: they were divided by real frontiers.

Each of those areas was entirely occupied by a band.

Mr. Speaker, those texts show without a doubt that the native people have some rights which must be upheld and which no government can repeal without any compensation.

Mr. Speaker, the debate deals today with the integrity of the territories rightfully belonging to the native people and I feel that this right must be recognized.

In a recent statement of the minister to the committee, he scarcely referred to the present conditions in Quebec as a result of the James Bay hydroelectric development.

It seems to me that up to now, this government as well as the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) did not want to commit themselves more than necessary. They would rather let the native people fend for themselves and provide the necessary funds for their defence.

I wonder whether we could not go so far as to force the government of the province of Quebec to abide by the treaties concluded when the territory was granted through a confederation Act.

Mr. Speaker, I shall go no further with my comments at this stage, but I feel that the proposal submitted to the committee by Georges Manuel, President of the National Indian Brotherhood of Canada, should be concurred in.

• (1630)

[English]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I am happy this afternoon to have the opportunity to participate in this important debate because, having been in my portfolio for five years, I have been involved in many discussions about Indian rights. It is always with great pleasure that I discuss them because, of course, as usual it is evident that the opposition parties are trying to catch up with what the government has already done. They just do not understand. They are always confused and it is important for us once in a while to come back here and tell them what is going on.