

not going to take any nonsense about it. He knew that if the community itself had control over that money that was spent on welfare then they could do a lot more and a lot better with it.

All these plans, ideas, hopes and frustrations have been a part of Sam's life for several years now. He has gone to meetings and talked with other Indians about how they could be put into practice. He has even heard non-Indian politicians from all three federal Parties say that they agree with his basic ideas. But progress seems painfully slow. Sam will not be one of the aboriginal leaders who comes back to Ottawa for the First Ministers' Conference at the end of March. However, he has met and talked with some who will be here. What he cannot understand is the attitude of some of the provincial Governments. He does not understand where his federal Government really stands either. He recalls some of the commitments the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) made two years ago. The Prime Minister said:

The special relationships between Canada and the aboriginal people should be strengthened... Aboriginal rights, especially the right of self-government, should have constitutional protections.

But now the constitutional conference is coming, and as far as land claims are concerned the Prime Minister seems to have gone into hibernation. Sam knew that his leaders had been working hard on this issue in contacting community groups, churches and unions explaining what aboriginal rights and self-government are all about, answering questions and concerns, anything people might have worrying them. They reassured them that land claims did not destroy the right of other people to own and enjoy property, that self-government did not mean separation. The latest polls show that the majority of Canadians understand at least that much. The great majority of Canadians want self-government and land claims to go ahead.

So why was the Prime Minister not giving some leadership on this issue? Probably the Prime Minister meant well, Sam reflected. He probably meant what he said when he talked about the right to self-government. But why was he not doing something about it? Why was he not leading public opinion instead of merely following it? Why did he not work to persuade the provincial Premiers that they had nothing to fear from land claims? And how about the Premiers themselves, especially the Premier of British Columbia? Why did the Government of British Columbia take such a stupid, perverse attitude, refusing to recognize aboriginal rights or aboriginal title?

Sam and the other people of his village found it highly offensive that the Government of British Columbia was willing to offer a few crumbs as concessions to the alleviation of Indian poverty, but absolutely refused to recognize their rights. It was not concessions or charity that Sam and his people wanted, it was justice. They want this right, and they want a Government in Victoria that will recognize the other rights. They want a Government in Ottawa that will stand up for them.

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Once we understand Sam and his people, and people like him in other aboriginal communities across Canada, we can begin to understand the issues involved in aboriginal title and aboriginal self-government. Technical problems, economic problems, constitutional and legal problems abound, but at the core of them all is the gut issue which is: Do we recognize the rights of aboriginal people or do we not? If we do recognize those rights, are we prepared to stand up and give leadership to see that those rights become a reality in our time?

We heard good intentions all around from all three Parties this afternoon. But one Party is in power. One Party has received an overwhelming mandate to govern the country. That is the Party that should be giving the leadership today. We are not seeing that leadership. Good intentions are not good enough. Unfortunately, to date, the Prime Minister and his Government have failed to show the kind of leadership that is needed if aboriginal title and aboriginal self-government are to become a reality in the immediate future.

In the two weeks before the constitutional conference I call upon the Prime Minister and members of Cabinet to show a real commitment to the aboriginal people and to work with the provinces and with the aboriginal leaders themselves so that a new relationship can grow and develop between Canada and the Indian, Métis and Inuit people who live within our borders.

Mr. Parry: Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my hon. colleague for his commitment to the concerns and the issues of aboriginal people that has been expressed over many years in his role as my predecessor as New Democratic Party spokesman on aboriginal affairs. In view of his experience I would like to ask him a question regarding the reply that the Minister of Indian Affairs (Mr. McKnight) gave to me concerning the federal Government's position on the aboriginal right to self-government.

Will the Hon. Member take a moment to explain how he sees the federal position that self-government is merely a contingent right? How does he see that stance of the federal Government in light of what a Constitution should be?

Mr. Manly: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. When the Minister responded to the question as to whether the Government saw the matter of aboriginal rights and the right to self-government as a contingent or an inherent right, he said that the Government had introduced its motion that saw it as a contingent right. But he said that they were prepared to support anything that came along. It seems that the Government is very wishy-washy on this whole subject. It would like to see some kind of an agreement. That would be a feather in its cap. But it does not have any strong, gut-level commitment to the question of aboriginal rights.

Aboriginal rights are not something that can be granted by the Parliament of Canada. They are not something that can be granted by the legislatures of our provinces. Aboriginal rights were not granted by the Royal Proclamation of George III. Aboriginal rights are the pre-existing rights of the people who were here before the coming of colonists and immigrants.