

Supply

justice, educational, and health systems, and it is working. Things are improving.

Turning to the second point raised by the Hon. Member, he may be quite correct in that there are individual Indians and Inuit today who are doing very well. There are certain communities, bands, or nations that are doing very well. However, as an entire people, as aboriginal nations, before contact or at the time of contact, when Europeans first came to this country they were self-sufficient, strong nations or communities.

Since that time and under the Indian Act and the Department of Indian Affairs, they have been subject to a terrible shock treatment by the overwhelming number of Europeans who came to this continent. We took away their best lands in many cases. We took away their rights. We did not respect many of their ways of doing things.

As nations I think they are worse off today than they were then, even though, as the Hon. Member pointed out, there may be 7,000 individuals in universities and so on.

I do not suggest for a minute that the Hon. Member was making the following comparison. However, we often hear from the South African Government, when it is attacked for its apartheid policies, that we must compare the blacks in South Africa who have better educational systems and health care with the people in neighbouring countries. Sometimes that is true, but they do not have the right to govern their own affairs. They do not have the right to make their own mistakes. They do not have the dignity and justice of being in complete control of their own destiny. The fact that some of them in South Africa may have better educational and health care systems never compensates for the lack of the other freedoms. I guess that is what is important to people who are struggling for self-government in Canada and in many other places in the world.

Mr. Manly: Madam Speaker, when the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) spoke he said that the position of the Government was to recognize the right to aboriginal self-government as a contingent right rather than an inherent right. He said that to recognize it as an inherent right would open the way to all kinds of court actions, which I think all of us wish to avoid; we wish to see some kind of negotiated settlement.

Not being a lawyer myself, I would really like to have a second opinion on it. Would the Hon. Member who is the lawyer give us his opinion whether or not the recognition of an inherent right would lead to a great number of court cases?

• (1640)

Mr. Allmand: I do not think so, Madam Speaker. I do not see how the recognition of Indian self-government as an inherent right, or aboriginal self-government as an inherent right of the aboriginal people, will lead to more litigation. If anything, it will lead to more negotiation. We have had and have now too much litigation between Indians and provincial

and federal Governments. We have cases in the courts all over the place. We have some even now. I have a press release today where the Cree of Quebec, to whom I have just referred, are taking legal action against the federal Government, and I think the Quebec Government as well, because there have been certain breakdowns in that agreement between them and these Governments. I personally believe the Member's colleague, the Hon. Member for Vancouver East (Ms. Mitchell), pointed out very well that when we entrenched language rights, equality rights and women's rights in the Constitution we did not spell them out in detail. We recognized these things in general terms. That was important. We are asking that the same thing be done with aboriginal self-government, and I think it will lead to negotiation, not to a lot of litigation.

Mr. Hicks: Madam Speaker, during the Hon. Member's comments he alluded to an inherent right. He made reference also to remarks by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) who earlier today made reference to an inherent right. To see if we are all on the same wavelength, would the Hon. Member attempt to define an inherent right for us?

Mr. Allmand: Madam Speaker, by that I mean, and I believe the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition and the aboriginal people themselves mean, that they existed as nations with languages, culture et cetera on this continent before the Europeans ever came. They had their own economies and institutions. Among those institutions were systems of self-government. We know they differ from one nation to another. The Iroquois, who are close to me, had one system of the long house which was different from those of the Objibway and the Cree. The Prairie Indians had other ways of doing things, but they had self-government and systems of self-government which they possessed as nations. Since they possessed them, we feel that this is a right they had that cannot be taken away.

I have tried to give an example of the fact that we fought in the Second World War because we did not believe that the Nazi Government of Germany had the right to overrun other countries and impose the Nazi way of living or government. Those countries, whether Belgium, Holland, France or Poland, have the inherent right to govern themselves in their own way as they had done for generations and generations and had the right to change it in their own way as they wished. That is what I mean and what others mean is an inherent right to Indian self-government.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Madam Speaker, I think we have had a very positive debate in the House this afternoon on a most important issue to Canada and to our original Canadians, the aboriginal peoples. As the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine Est (Mr. Allmand), the former Minister of Indian Affairs, said, the Indian people were in this country many years before the Europeans came along. There are many different Indian nations from one part of Canada to the other.

I want to say a few words this afternoon as someone who represents many Prairie Indian people. My riding has eight