

to negotiating with the Indian people their rights of self-government. I look forward to this process hopefully coming forward in the not too distant future.

● (1420)

While I shall have some questions during the Committee of the Whole procedure, I want to say that our Party is proud to support this Bill and we will assure its passage this afternoon so that we can celebrate what I think is a very historic Bill in the House of Commons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak on this very important Bill which is before us today. It has been called the Cree-Naskapi Act. I believe it is an important piece of legislation. It is the only piece of legislation upon which this House has acted which grants more in the way of legislative rights to the native people of Canada, at least to one group of native people within Canada.

I would like to point out it is unfortunate that the Indian Act as it is now written makes it necessary for us to have to pass particular legislation in this area. Native people throughout this land face a very restrictive piece of legislation in the Indian Act. Other groups within society do not have to appeal to the Parliament of Canada for their own self-government, to determine their own education authorities and to have the necessary facilities for their health and economic development. It is unfortunate that the Indian people of this land have to come to Parliament for that kind of authority. The House committee on Indian self-government has said that we should be moving in this area, that this House should be passing legislation and this nation should be passing constitutional amendments to ensure the rights of native people to self-government.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we must also move on the very important area of providing adequate funding to native people. One of the items discovered by the committee on Indian self-government was the complete lack of adequate funding for education, for self-government, for health and for economic development. Many of the conditions in which all native people find themselves are completely unacceptable to the majority of Canadians.

In the Province of Manitoba, on a different matter, it is interesting to note that the Department of Indian Affairs spends on the education of Indian children only two-thirds of the money which the Province of Manitoba spends on the education of people in other parts of northern Manitoba.

What we have is not only a need for legislation for the Cree-Naskapi people, but a need for this Government to bring about constitutional change, changes in the legislation affecting Indian affairs and changes in the actual funding of money that goes to the native people throughout this land.

James Bay Agreement

In my Province of Manitoba there have been attempts by the bands to come to an agreement on band funding, a funding formula which would provide the necessary money for the bands to carry out educational and health services so they can administer their own self-government within their communities. That agreement has not been forthcoming. Over two years of work have been done by the chiefs and the budget committee of the chiefs of Manitoba to try to get this Parliament to act and get the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Munro) to come to some agreement with them on funding. Similarly, the tribal councils in Manitoba have had a problem moving in this direction.

Mr. McDermid: All tribal councils have.

Mr. Murphy: Tribal councils throughout Canada have been trying to get some agreement so they can have the necessary funds to act. Some tribal councils have some funding. Other tribal councils, like the Island Lake Tribal Council in my riding, have no adequate funding with which to act.

While I am glad to see this legislation before us today, and I will be speaking in favour of it, it is only one piece of legislation in a long list of legislation promised by the Minister of Indian Affairs. He has promised legislation on self-government, on amending Section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act. He has promised funding for recreation, for tribal councils and for the proper administration of band councils for the needs of the people. None of that has taken place.

I see the Minister is in the House and I would like to make that point again. We must have him act not only on this promise but on a whole litany of promises that he has made to the native people over the last four years. This House has only two and a half weeks to go before the summer recess. I do not think we have enough days left to meet even half the promises which the Minister has made. I do wish, if time permits, that he would stand up and explain to us whether he has any other legislation affecting Indian people that he plans to introduce before this House recesses. If not, he should let the bands know. He should tell the bands and the native people what he is going to do to provide funding for health care, for education and for proper band administration over the next little while.

With regard to the legislation before us, I want to congratulate the leadership of the Cree and Naskapi people for getting this legislation into the House. Even though it has taken seven to eight years for this House to act, they are one of the few groups in Canada which have got legislation before it. I believe what they have achieved is only rightfully theirs. As I said, it is something in terms of administration which all other Canadians have already. It is a major achievement for the leadership of the Cree and Naskapi people. Our critic, the Hon. Member for Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands (Mr. Manly) has been very active in this House and in the committee on Indian affairs. He has spoken about the needs of the people.