

Government Orders

The second question I have was referred to by the previous government speaker from Vancouver Centre, in which she implied that this commission has the authority to actually state whether or not the parties involved are ready to negotiate. That is not necessarily my interpretation of what the act actually states. It states that the commission can assess the readiness of the parties. I think that is possibly a little loose from the point of view of what the criteria are to base that assessment on. It could turn to a dictatorial type of thing from the commission's point of view that one must meet these specified criteria.

Mr. Anawak: Mr. Speaker, in responding to the question I may not necessarily satisfy the member. I look at it from the point of view that it has taken two years for this government, but it has taken since 1871, which is 124 years, to arrive at this stage. I think what we should be rejoicing in is the fact that we have finally come to this stage today, so let us move forward from here. While I would be very hopeful that the negotiations will be expeditious, it has taken 124 years. I would hope that when the negotiated settlement arrives it will be the best for all concerned, but especially for the people who have been trying to get to this stage for the last 124 years.

On the other question, we have to do our bit as members of Parliament to ensure that the best possible procedure is taken to ensure a more expeditious conclusion of land claim negotiations in British Columbia.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I was a little bemused at the parliamentary secretary's remarks with respect to the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville's question on treaty cards and DNA. I would expect a parliamentary secretary could recognize a bit of sarcasm when he sees it.

He must be aware that there is a stampede of people who have just a few drops of aboriginal blood trying to get their hands on treaty cards. If he thinks this is not a problem, he should consult with the band councils that have to deal with this and the problems created by Bill C-31. The secretary has to be aware that treaty cards have become articles of commerce. If he is not aware of this, he should not be secretary of state. If he is, he should not pretend to misunderstand the member for Yorkton—Melville.

With regard to the question of apartheid and who has it and who does not, it strikes me as curious that while South Africa is doing away with apartheid, the parliamentary secretary advocates and applauds the establishment of homelands within the Dominion of Canada. I think we should be moving beyond all that and be talking about one Canada, not a whole bunch of little enclaves divided on the basis of race and history. I know all that was irrelevant to Bill C-107, but it was a response to the irrelevant remarks of the parliamentary secretary.

• (1230)

Mr. Anawak: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to get a question from the hon. member.

I am a member of Parliament and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, but I am also an Inuk.

Whether the government of the day or governments past or the member believes it or not, as far as I am concerned all of Canada belonged to the aboriginal people long before, in some cases 30,000 years, anybody else came along. That is my belief. However I have to be realistic. Some 30 million people now live in Canada, the majority of whom are other than aboriginal. We have to deal with that reality.

However, the wrongs that have been done to the aboriginal people are very wrong. This is how I feel. I am not naive about aboriginal concerns. If the hon. member wants me to elaborate on aboriginal issues and aboriginal concerns I can do that quite well without any lessons from the member across.

I live in the small community in the north in which I grew up. In 1962 the Inuit got the vote. I know about aboriginal concerns. I know some people came north and started putting up "no trespassing" signs on gravel deposits. No trespassing signs on my land? I have no lessons to learn from the hon. member across. Aboriginal people have been on the receiving end of a lot of wrongs for a long time. This attempts to correct the injustices that have been done.

When the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville makes a statement like that I am unlike the member across. I do not think the person is joking. I realize there may be some problems with the status cards. That probably is the case. Is it the Indians, the aboriginal people doing that? I do not know. I must say I am naive in that regard. I can honestly tell the member that I do not know. I apologize for not knowing because it is part of my responsibility.

One my responsibilities is to ensure that there is expeditious approval of bills that deal with the concerns of aboriginal people. I hope the hon. member, when we are dealing with this bill, will give his support to it so that we can correct the injustices that have been dealt to the aboriginal people in British Columbia.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, before I get into the text of my remarks I will make a few comments on the parliamentary secretary's remarks.

The parliamentary secretary was discussing the issue of land ownership. He said that in his opinion the land that we know as Canada is owned by aboriginal people. I remind the parliamentary secretary this issue has been dealt with in the courts. It has been dealt with in the Delgamuukw decision which was originally heard in the B.C. supreme court and was appealed to the B.C. court of appeal and is going before the Supreme Court of Canada