

Government Orders

I believe that in the Yukon, as elsewhere, native peoples are realizing that the solution to their problems is through self-government.

● (1725)

The will of the natives to assume responsibility for themselves is there. The feeling I get from the government of Canada is one of wanting to withdraw from the Indian Act. I think the minister did make announcement to that effect also. Of course, this is not going to happen overnight. Pilot projects are under way, in Manitoba for example, to examine the possibility for First Nations to withdraw from the Indian Act.

But resolving the self-government issue would go a long way toward solving the problem of withdrawing from the Indian Act, so that the government can go ahead with the dismantling as soon as possible. On this subject, the minister and the government have referred to their intention to put an end to their trusteeship over Indians. The Bloc Quebecois will keep a close eye on this. The government has ventured to say that it should be abolished. Now, we in the Official Opposition will make sure that this is done properly.

It has to be done with respect for the cultures involved. On our side, we are from a European background originally. The aboriginal peoples were the first inhabitants of this land. How do we reconcile all of this? Our self-government negotiation process actually leads to this. It leads us to say: "What can be devolved in terms of autonomy, level of activity, legislation?" Such choices should allow them to live in harmony with us and be in keeping with our legislation.

I think that the kind of agreement we have before us indeed provides a middle ground that enables the First Nations to steer away from the Indian Act, to assume responsibility for themselves and to live in perfect harmony with our laws. They also attach a great deal of importance to gaining control over their own administration because their health system, for example, is not the same as ours. They have a much more holistic approach to health. They are more prone to using healing circles, a much more gregarious approach than the curative approach we currently have in Canadian society.

The same with justice. We note that, in extremely remote communities, they often have their own law enforcement system. Healing circles take charge of young offenders or individuals with adjustment difficulties. They solve the problems they encounter themselves. We are not even aware that when we barge in with our way of looking at the situation it often is inappropriate and just makes the problem worse.

All this to say that, to deal with self-government, we have this bill and it is important to have such a bill. It will also be important to implement it.

How do we go about it? The hon. member who spoke before me said, "We give them \$8 billion a year". It is not quite \$8 billion; I think it is around \$6 billion. But if we want this to end, we must help them take control of their own destiny.

We need a territory that is large enough and contains enough resources so that we can stop spending millions of dollars on education, health care, etc., and let them take control of their own destiny. That is why we will allow them to tax or collect royalties from all their lands. Giving them land in the Yukon is a solution which, I think, will allow them to develop their own territory to compensate for the shortfall due to the withdrawal of our financial assistance.

Compensation in the order of \$242 million will enable these people to make their decisions now. These people will no longer have to deal with federal officials trying to impose their programs. They will create their own programs, which I think is something worth mentioning.

We must, of course, have confidence in these people. I have confidence in them because I have seen them in action. I have seen how serious they are about taking control of their own destiny. I think that we must simply recognize that the First Nations will be in a much better position than federal officials in Ottawa to implement programs and that we must trust them.

Quebec is in a good position to help in this regard. The James Bay Agreement and the motion passed by the National Assembly show that Quebec can be proud of being a pioneer in the transfer of powers to aboriginal nations. I see Quebec's James Bay Agreement as a model which, in my opinion, has been used for many existing agreements on self-government.

● (1730)

I remind you that this model was entirely financed by the Quebec government. The takeover and the relationship between the native community and the Quebec government are getting closer. This is demonstrated by the way Quebec's current government is handling joint management with the natives. Important and judicious negotiations are continuing in this regard.

Before moving on to the content and clauses of Bill C-55, I must mention a few things that I find regrettable. I do not want to appear overly critical to my friends from the Reform Party, but it must be noted that immigrants, in my opinion, are not very respectful of Natives. I am willing to give them the benefit of the doubt and say that there are financial and territorial implications to be looked at, as we are doing in committee and right here, but we know at the outset that they have no respect for natives taking control of their own destiny or for their ability to do so.

I listened to the speeches made by some members, including the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap, who does not think that any native group should be given self-government rights