

Mr. Manly: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member for Lambton-Middlesex (Mr. Fraleigh) on his opening speech. During his speech he referred to the native people as the first inhabitants in his riding. Of course, that is true for all our ridings.

Has the Hon. Member had an opportunity to give particular thought to the problems and alternatives facing native people in Canada today? I am not aware of the situation in his riding and perhaps he could enlighten us about that in his response.

I believe it is generally recognized among those who have studied the situation that the present system is not working. It is not working for the Indian people of Canada and it is not working for the Canadian taxpayer.

In the last Parliament, there was a special committee of the House which studied the whole question. It brought forward the report on Indian self-government with some major recommendations, urging that Canada recognize First Nations governments and that we make the resources available to them to act as governments. In fact, the right to govern themselves has always existed. Has the Member had a chance to consider some of the needs of the Indian people in light of Indian self-government and would he be in favour of that proposal, willing to support it and work for it?

● (1750)

Mr. Fraleigh: Mr. Speaker, I have four reservations in my riding and I am quite conversant with native problems. I happen to have served here for a short time during 1979-1980 and I served on the Standing Committee for Indian Affairs and Northern Development in order to make myself more conversant with those problems. I happen to support wholeheartedly the initiative of more self-government for the native people when they are ready. I think a great number of native people themselves will admit that there are large sectors of the native population which are not at this point in our history ready to assume full self-government.

I come from an area where the native people are more advanced than in many other areas. We have reasonably high employment on our reservations compared to that in other parts of the country. These people are good citizens. My understanding of the problem nation-wide is that there are a great many areas in Canada where the band councils and the people who are governing reservations are not by their own admission ready to take over full self-government.

Mr. Manly: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. I would like to thank the Hon. Member for his answer. But I think the crux of his answer was the question of readiness on the part of Indian people to govern themselves. The testimony we as a committee heard time and time again was that the native people have never given up the right to govern themselves. The presence of a colonial type of administration in the Department of Indian Affairs has impeded the right and ability of the Indian people to govern themselves. What they want is for us to get off their backs so that they can do that.

The Address—Mr. Fraleigh

Does the Hon. Member not believe that the best people to decide when they are ready to govern would be the Indian people themselves? They are the ones who can best determine their fitness for self-government.

Mr. Fraleigh: Mr. Speaker, I thought that I had addressed the question. I said that the areas in my region were ready. By the native peoples' own admission there are a great many areas where they themselves do not feel they have the infrastructure and the knowledge to take on full self-government. I could not agree with you more that the present system is not working. It has never worked. We have tried a multitude of band-aid solutions. None of them have worked. I do not profess to have the answers. This is a major problem. I would suggest to you, Sir, that for us, as a government, simply to walk away from the native people and say, "There you go. You look after yourselves. Govern yourselves and do all the things that we have been doing for you," would create chaos in the native community.

Mr. Nystrom: I have a question and a short comment, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to welcome the Hon. Member back to the House. He said he was here between 1979 and 1980. He mentioned that we should be out there on the streets listening to what people are saying so that we understand. I think I know what people are saying. I think they want a lot of changes. They listened to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) who made a lot of promises and who made a lot of commitments. Their expectations are very high.

I was here in 1968 when another Prime Minister also caught the imagination of the Canadian people. He made a lot of changes. He made a lot of commitments. He promised participatory democracy and he promised a new vision of a new society. It will be very dangerous if this Prime Minister follows the lead of the former one and does not fulfil those expectations.

We have now heard a Speech from the Throne and we have had an economic statement. A lot of commitments were made. I am not sure whether the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) was right when he said there were 330-odd promises. There might be that many but I am not sure. A lot of commitments that were made have not been delivered in the Speech from the Throne, nor have they been delivered in the economic statement. Why has this not happened? Is this not a dangerous thing in terms of people getting very cynical about the process? I will give you one example, Mr. Speaker, and then I will sit down. In my own province, commitments were made to fund farmers in northeast Saskatchewan, to freeze freight rates and to improve farm stabilization programs. All kinds of other commitments were made to farmers. So far there has been no delivery except for a study on the capital gains tax. I find that kind of thing very dangerous. I would like to know what the Hon. Member's feelings are.

Mr. Fraleigh: Mr. Speaker, I could not disagree more that the present Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) will follow the example set by the previous one. There is nothing more sure than that.