

Indian Affairs

manage their own affairs. I want to address myself to those two concerns.

First, it is important, as we begin the formal stage of this debate, to make it clear to everyone concerned that there are limits upon the settlement the national treasury can afford. We do not intend to give away the country, or give it back, depending on your point of view. What we seek is a fair and reasonable settlement and it must be fair and reasonable to both sides.

On the question of costs, the point deserves reiteration that we are involved in costs now, heavy costs. In direct dollar terms, the annual budget of the Department of Indian Affairs, as the minister so readily boasts, involves the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars each year. In indirect dollar terms there is the high and recurrent cost of provincial welfare and other programs serving native populations. In human terms, which dollar calculations cannot compute, we pay the staggering price each year of human potential wasted or destroyed by an imposed system which neither challenges the individual Indian citizen nor allows him to follow the course he would choose.

So there are high costs today, and while a settlement based on recognition of aboriginal rights would not suddenly eliminate those costs, or perhaps even eliminate some of them, it would lead to the extinguishment of some existing claims and could lead to the breaking down of the hand-out psychology which has made too many native people the wards of state instead of contributing citizens.

This brings me to the second fear of many white Canadians, the fear that native people cannot manage their own affairs or do not want to. It is an inescapable fact, in my province at least, that this fear is greatest among people who live closest to reserves. They have simply seen too much evidence of Indian people whose behaviour confirms the unhappy stereotype of the lazy Indian. It is my experience that the anger of the whites toward the lazy Indian is mild when compared to the anger and resentment of industrious Indian leaders and people. It is also an inescapable fact that, while examples can be found of lazy Indians, so can examples be found of industrious and creative citizens. We meet them virtually every time the standing committee assembles and every time we visit reserves. In a sense, the industrious Indian is the more to be marvelled at because he has overcome a system of paternalism which is designed to break down dignity and independence. Anyone acquainted with the treatment of native people in Canada must at least accept that lazy Indians are lazy because we made them so.

This is a condition which white society and the predecessors of this parliament have helped to create. We have established and imposed a system which has locked too many Indian people into the stereotype and into the fact of aimless dependence upon the state, and the architects of that system are at least as much to blame as its victims.

There is no point in laying blame upon the past, but surely we cannot refuse to deal with the just claims of Canada's Indians simply because some of them have slipped into the trap of dependence which our society helped to set for them. To do that would be to guarantee that Canada's Indian people will never escape a welfare

trap unless they do it violently. Indeed, that might amount to an invitation to violence, because our refusal to deal reasonably with the moderate men and women who constitute much of the modern leadership of Canada's Indian people would almost certainly undermine the authority of these leaders and set up less responsible replacements.

• (1720)

At the least, such a response would break the growing spirit of Canadian Indian people to stand on their own and make their own contribution as individuals and as a people to the development of Canada. In fact, one consequence of the eventual settlement of aboriginal claims is that Canadian native people will then be forced to stand on their own, because once the settlements are made, the claims are gone. If money received in settlement is wasted, that will be it. There will be no big brother to go back to. Knowing this, knowing that the settlements which are reached will have to be lived with, will itself force native people to face basic questions about their status, about the reserve system, about other matters, and force them to face those questions with a seriousness which cannot exist in the present phony atmosphere of so-called consultation, when they naturally believe their opinions are being sought only to be ignored.

What the settlement of aboriginal claims will mean to the Indian people is not simply money or land but, more important, responsibility in a much fuller sense than exists in the paternalistic system we have today. Beyond that, a recognition of aboriginal rights is a matter of simple justice, made more urgent by prolonged delay. These are the people who first occupied this land. We took it from them, seldom by conquest, sometimes by agreements which were unfair then or are inadequate now, sometimes without settlement at all. After taking this land, we took their dignity and independence. In simple terms, we owe a debt. If we believe in any sort of justice in society, we must recognize our obligation to Canada's native people.

The way to begin that movement toward justice and responsibility is to deal with Indian people as though they are capable of responsibility; to deal with them as we would deal with other Canadians who have a claim. This resolution today asks no more than that, and we in our party believe that the Parliament of Canada can do no less.

Mr. Howard: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have had discussion with some members of this House, obviously not all, to see whether we might reduce the time allotted to speakers from 15 minutes to 10 minutes henceforth. I understand that would be an agreeable course of action. I wonder whether I might put that proposition to the House, through you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Hon. members have heard the suggestion of the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard). Is there agreement to reduce the time of speeches to ten minutes?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Judd Buchanan (London West): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to speak to this motion for