

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

QUEBEC—ADMINISTRATION OF ESKIMO AFFAIRS

On the orders of the day:

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Gregoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Justice. Can he give us a report of the meeting which took place with the ministers of the provincial government concerning the transfer of jurisdiction over the Eskimos in the province of Quebec?

Could he also tell us when that transfer of jurisdiction will take place?

Hon. Guy Favreau (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I feel that question should be addressed to the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Laing), whose department is directly concerned.

Mr. Gregoire: May I put the same question to the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, that is whether he has any comments to make to the house about the meeting held this week end concerning the transfer of jurisdiction over Eskimo affairs? Could he also tell us when the transfer will take place?

[Text]

Hon. Arthur Laing (Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources): Mr. Speaker, I do not think I can do any better than bring to the attention of the house a statement that we agreed upon on Saturday, in which it is stated that recommendations will be made to our respective governments on the following matters:

1. The method by which the Eskimos are to be consulted prior to the finalization of an agreement of transfer;

2. The principles and basic conditions which will serve to protect the rights and interests of the Eskimos;

3. The establishment of a committee to which is given the task of preparing a draft agreement.

Among matters still outstanding before the general agreement can be concluded are the financial arrangements between the two governments. On both sides, we will submit to our respective governments the results of our discussions, after which the results of Saturday's discussions may be made public.

Hon. Paul Martineau (Pontiac-Temisamingue): I should like to ask the minister if, as a result of the statement he has just read, the government is now committed to the principle of the transfer of the Eskimos to provincial authority.

Mr. Laing: The government stated, sir, that in principle it had adopted the idea

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of the transfer of Eskimos to provincial jurisdiction subject to certain basic limitations, so far as we were concerned, in respect of the manner in which the change was to be undertaken and primarily in respect of the preservation of the rights of the Eskimos themselves. Behind this was the reiteration of the government of Canada that responsibility for these people continued to rest with it.

Mr. Martineau: Have those limitations been accepted by the Quebec government?

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Bow River): May I ask a supplementary question. I wonder if the minister read an article in the *Globe and Mail* of this morning which carried the heading "Quebec May Assume Eskimo Jurisdiction"? The writer is Thomas Sloan, and he says a deal has already been made in relation to 2,500 Eskimos in that part of Quebec which is characterized as new Quebec. Is that article in error, or is the minister not now revealing everything?

Mr. Laing: I read the article, too, and I think my hon. friend is in error when he draws the inference that the writer says a deal has already been made. I do not think that statement is made in the article.

Mr. Woolliams: Then may I rise on a point of privilege in reference to the facts. This is a quote from the article in question—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Does the hon. member take responsibility for that article?

Mr. Woolliams: No, I do not, Mr. Speaker. However, I may say this on a point of privilege. The minister has already said that the article does not contain this statement to which I referred him. Surely that is a point of personal privilege. If the article does contain that statement, then I say that the minister is in error, and that is the point of my personal privilege.

Mr. Speaker: I do not see any point of personal privilege there. The minister gave a clear, concise answer. He said no.

Mr. Woolliams: May I read the article in connection with my point of personal privilege?

Some hon. Members: No, no.

Mr. Speaker: Not unless the hon. member cares to assume responsibility for it, which I am sure he does not.

Mr. Martineau: I had a supplementary question in connection with this matter, and the minister was ready to answer it. In case he has forgotten the question, it was this. Does the Quebec government accept the limitations that the minister has enumerated?