

approach the Indian people and tell them, "These are our decisions. Do you agree or not?" We have been doing that for hundreds of years. I say we should simply recognize the historical facts which I mentioned previously. Aboriginal rights existed. They were not extinguished. We should sit down honourably with the people affected and identify with them what those rights are, spell them out and seek to negotiate with respect to them.

Parliament today is in an unique position, a position that as far as I know it has never before been in. Parliament has before it an opportunity to recognize the abuses and the neglect of the past and to set a course of redress for the future. The burdens arising from our history cannot any longer be carried on our conscience. We must no longer permit ourselves to hide from our obligations nor to deny the spiritual and cultural inheritance of the native peoples. Qualified consideration of aboriginal rights, of aboriginal title, is not enough. It is not strong enough; it is not honest.

This parliament, today, without seeking to talk the matter out, without seeking to go beyond six o'clock and to deny an opportunity for the matter to come back again only if it suits the convenience of government, must demand of itself the unselfish act of searching its own conscience, its own heart, its own integrity and declare that the native peoples of this land have aboriginal rights, have an aboriginal title. Surely nothing less than that kind of honourable declaration should be expected from a group of men and women who themselves carry the title of "honourable."

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on this debate, which seems to me to be very important, for as I listened to the two previous speakers and to passed debates of various length, especially since the beginning of this session. I have realized that there are problems not just in the field of Indian affairs, but also concerning "land ownership" which had until now been attributed to the Indians, to the aborigines.

To my mind, Mr. Speaker, this is not a new problem, and it does not apply just to one area of Canada, but to the whole country, and even if I am not too well informed of what is going on in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the other provinces, I think I know a bit more about what is happening in the province of Quebec and in the eleventh province, which I represent, Abitibi.

Mr. Speaker, there is at the moment large scale development in this area, all of it in territory that belongs to the Indians, to the natives. There as elsewhere, the problem is that the government of Quebec simply told the natives: Move over, we are coming!

Mr. Speaker, the House should pay close attention to this point, and the federal government may be right in fearing an almost inevitable confrontation with the government of Quebec, for it is only recently that the province of Quebec has tried to take an interest in the Indians and to do anything for them. In fact, this only goes back as far as the quiet revolution of the Hon. Jean Lesage. A liberal minister who has since been elected leader of an opposition party and who is now sitting in the National Assembly indicated himself that it was time that Quebec

### Indian Affairs

looked after the Indians in its territory, but that interest ran short and was of little profit for the Indians.

I have here a newspaper clipping from *La Presse*; it is an editorial by Mr. Guy Cormier dated Tuesday, July 16, 1968 which recalls statement by Indian chiefs on that subject. The article reflects the concern of the Indian chiefs at that time. Since then, we know that the government of Quebec put the Department of Natural Resources in charge of Indian and Eskimo affairs and the Indians, the interested party did not waste time to voice their opinion through their chiefs. Here are the words of chief Andrew Tanakokate Delisle:

Quebec also wants to look after the Indians? We will have more offices . . . where as usual, nobody takes responsibilities . . . We are tired to go from an office to another. All we want is to deal with responsible people. Moreover, I note once more that decisions are made without consultation. They talk about our rights. But, in my opinion, the ones who are in a position to speak of Indian rights in this province are the Indians themselves.

Mr. Speaker, when the decision was made by the government of Quebec to develop that large area of the James Bay basin for building a hydroelectric complex, they forgot to consult those most directly affected in that area. They acted with lightning speed merely to fulfil an election promise: new jobs had to be created and it was urgent.

Another chief, the one from Sept-Îles, showed a reaction still less pleasant than that of chief Delisle. Here is what he said:

• (1620)

Among all provinces, Quebec comes first as far as segregation is concerned . . . If Quebecers, a minority in Canada, wish to be respected, let them begin by respecting the minorities close to them.

Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat the history of the province of Quebec and of Canada in general. I will limit myself chiefly to the province of Quebec and the James Bay development project, because that question is now in the limelight.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to point out that the intelligence of the Indian people should not be under-estimated. Let us not think that the Indians are not cunning. They are aware of the property they used to have.

That vast undeveloped territory may seem unimportant to white people, but if it were developed, we would be surprised to see the wealth it contains. It is not my intention at this stage to give details, as it was done on other occasions and we might have the opportunity to come back to that.

But the fact remains that the inhabitants of that area are aware of the situation. Indeed, the James Bay Indians know very well that they will never be able to stop hydro electric development in that area, especially when it has already been decided by Americans. Nevertheless they want to get at least a compensation for the territory they will lose.

Land has been expropriated for the Forillon park in Gaspesia; I will not question the amount paid but at least we have been paying. Land has been expropriated to develop the Valcartier military base. Once more, we have been paying. Land has been expropriated to build the