

Supply

variance with everything for which the Minister and the Prime Minister stand?

I would also like to ask the Minister about the consultation process. He said that no changes would be made without a full and open consultation process. Yet in his press release of two days ago, when he spoke about the new funding formula for political organizations, he said that he would be consulting with Indian chiefs. But the only process which was stated in the press release was:

The Ministers said letters were going out requesting written proposals addressing the principles of the new policy. The additional suggestions would be added to those Crombie received during an extensive schedule of meetings with chiefs across Canada.

Is the request for written proposals the full extent of the consultation? What process of consultation will be followed in the development of the new land claims policy about which the Minister said he would be very proud when it was released?

Mr. Crombie: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the first question regarding the task force report and its terms of reference, quite frankly, I would have to ask the Member to direct that question to the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen) because I am not involved in that task force. I might say that, at least, it showed that this is not a hidebound Government. We in the Government are willing to entertain a broad range of thoughts and options.

With respect to his question regarding funding, I can assure the Hon. Member that the whole purpose of my office sending out letters asking the Indian organizations to discuss among themselves considerations regarding funding was to elicit their views. The process began some months ago. As the Member will know, I went across the country from reserve to reserve and from assembly to assembly. One of the things about which we talked was the funding of Indian organizations at the band, tribal, regional and national level. That was the second phase. It was to say: "Thanks very much; there appear to be three principles upon which we can all agree". I think the Hon. Member would agree with those three principles which were outlined in the press released. The Indian organizations are to respond to me on those principles.

Following that, I will hold whatever discussions are appropriate. Those discussions may differ from one part of the country to another. For example, in British Columbia there is already a certain practice of band council resolutions, which practice will not be found in other parts of the country. Therefore, there will not be one response from coast to coast. It will very much depend on what I get back. If, indeed, I had already figured out the third part of the process, I would be denying the importance of getting their input in the second phase. I can assure the Hon. Member that nothing will be done until that has been completed. He is aware of that, as are other Members, as are the aboriginal people.

With respect to the third item concerning land claims, as I believe I mentioned in the House the other day to the Hon. Member, I met with claimant groups and we drew up some terms of reference and had some discussions as to whom we would like to have serve on a study group. Therefore, the

process is contained in those terms of reference. It will take about six months. It is not finalized, only because we have not yet completed our selection of people. As soon as it is available, I will provide a copy for Hon. Members.

Mr. Moore: Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister's understanding of the legal and moral obligations which he as a Minister has toward the Indian people?

Mr. Crombie: Mr. Speaker, it is tough to answer that question in a minute, but I can say that my first responsibility is, of course, to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. However, I have an unusual responsibility which I believe is contained both in tradition and probably in law, and that is that I speak as an advocate and have what is known in the law as a fiduciary obligation to aboriginal people to ensure that they are dealt with, both individually and collectively, according to the highest possible standards which this country has.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House today states:

That this House condemns the government for its confusing and manipulative approaches to Indian and aboriginal issues in Canada, thereby fostering uncertainty, distrust, cynicism and outrage among native peoples—

It goes on to refer to three examples of the confusing and manipulative approaches. It refers to the First Ministers' Conference in April. Then it refers to the leaked document to which we have all referred as "The Buffalo Jump of the 1980s". Third, it refers to situations in which the Minister says one thing, of which many of us on this side approve, about which other individuals in the Government are saying something else.

With respect to the First Ministers' Conference which was held in April, although it started well, that conference was a failure. We must admit that. The documents which were tabled by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the statements which were made by the Prime Minister on the first day were good. As a matter of fact, I put them side by side with the documents which were tabled at the previous aboriginal conference by the previous Prime Minister, and they were pretty much the same. They were not perfect in either case, but they were something with which to work. They were something which the aboriginal people of Canada felt they could use as a base during the conference on which to build and improve. But during the process of the conference, the provinces which did not understand aboriginal rights and Indian self-government attacked the proposals of the Prime Minister and the Government. Those provinces would not give in. Finally, the Government went the way of those provinces.

I was at the entire conference and I watched what happened. Between the meetings, instead of the Government leaning on the provinces which were hesitant to agree, it leaned on the aboriginal groups to accept a weakened version of the proposals for self-government. It was a situation of big, strong, wealthy provinces with lots of resources going against the major aboriginal groups of the country which do not have many resources, but which do their best to get along. Instead of the Prime Minister taking the side of the aboriginal people