

Government Orders

aboriginal children, but there is an increased demand up there, and we must provide the additional services required.

For some time, there was no problem with the federal government concerning the payment of these costs each year. Since 1987, however, the government has changed its way of doing things. It wants to index its contribution to the annual inflation rate and sticks to this rate instead of abiding by the provisions of the James Bay agreement which were negotiated in good faith by the federal government, Quebec as well as the Crees, the Naskapi and the Inuit.

Unfortunately, for the Quebec government, this meant a loss of \$199 million in income. What did it do? It could easily have said to the young Crees, as some provinces did to other native groups: "Look, since the federal government, which has the fiduciary responsibility for the fees incurred on the reserves, is not paying its share, we are no longer able to financially support education for the young Crees, under the James Bay agreement. Tell them that some children will not be able to go to school this year".

I said earlier that the same thing goes on elsewhere in the United States. The people covered by the Treaty No. 7 in central Canada are being told that they can forget about post-secondary education. "We cannot send your children to school this year, because we ran out of money".

• (1705)

We could have done the same thing in Quebec, but the Quebec government met its responsibilities and took upon itself to foot the bill. Now, it is asking the federal government, the current Liberal government, to pay its share. I must say that I think it is unfortunate that the claim made by the government of Quebec has not been settled. We are talking about \$199 million. It cannot just be shrugged off.

Professor Morse, an assistant to the Indian affairs minister, also says that Quebec has shown great leadership in promoting economic development. There are some economic development provisions in the James Bay agreement where it is recognized that significant compensation must be paid to the native communities following the construction of hydro-electric dams, and that was done. Their hunting, trapping and fruit-picking rights were also recognized. We are also leaders in economic development.

Furthermore, there is a happy combination of traditional activities, like hunting and fishing, and marketing. It is also worth mentioning that there are local outfitting operations managed by natives.

In health care, we see the same thing. The Quebec government is the leader. Natives in Quebec are in much better health than their counterparts in the rest of Canada.

Finally, I hope for the benefit of British Columbia natives that the federal government will adopt Bill C-107 and will go further and use its influence and its fiduciary role to force the Harcourt government to go back to the negotiating table. I also hope that the negotiations concerning the Nisga'as will be resumed and that the participation of the federal government as a party in the British Columbia Treaty Commission will be accepted so that natives in that province can one day benefit from as much generosity as natives in Quebec.

[English]

Ms. Bridgman: Mr. Speaker, a request has been made by the hon. member for Vancouver East that she be able to use my time as she has commitments tomorrow. I have no problem with that.

The Deputy Speaker: Everything is possible with unanimous consent.

[Translation]

We could proceed this way with unanimous consent.

[English]

It would be understood, presumably, that the hon. member for Vancouver East would speak today for 20 minutes with a 10-minute question and answer period and that the Reform Party representative would have 40 minutes without a question and answer period the next time the matter comes up for debate.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Anna Terrana (Vancouver East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Surrey North for allowing me to speak.

[Translation]

I would also like to thank the Bloc Quebecois for letting me speak now.

[English]

The bill before us marks the culmination of a long and at times difficult struggle. It is born of British Columbia's unique history. It is the product of many years of hard work and goodwill. Fairness, clarity and justice are not issues of party politics. They are elements of principles which we all share as Canadians.

Over the decades many people have played a part: people from various parties and political ideologies, people who shared little in common except a desire to see justice done and to get on with building a brighter future for British Columbia.