

*Government Orders*

reading, on the basis of the Official Languages Act, which was not true, of course, and that is why I take this opportunity today to set matters straight.

As I said before, the Bloc Québécois already has a position on self-government. We support self-government. To define the concept of self-government, we have the choice of several dictionaries. For my part, I referred to the *Petit Larousse*.

Self-government is defined as "government of a group by the action of its own members, independently from a central power". As for government, it is defined as "the right, function or power of governing, of running a country".

An agreement on self-government means that the central power, the Crown in this case, agrees to relinquish a certain number of areas of responsibility to this group, to effectively enable it to assume responsibility for itself and decide its own future. That is no different by the way, from the traditional claims of Quebec which in fact wants a little more than self-government, namely complete sovereignty.

I have to mention in passing the similarity between the two situations. As I said earlier, the Bloc Québécois has always been in favour of self-government for native peoples and it demonstrates its support today by supporting Bill C-34.

The agreement was negotiated under the existing policy concerning self-government. This means that government commitments with respect to self-government for the nations concerned are not governed by the provisions of clause 35. They are not considered as part of a modern treaty. There is no protection under the Constitution, contrary to what we will see later in the case of Bill C-33. This must be made very clear from the start. Protection under the Constitution cannot be guaranteed today by tabling these agreements.

• (1630)

About self-government, it should be pointed out that more than one definition must be examined more closely. Finally, self-government is exercised to some extent at the discretion of both sides. Advocating self-government is one thing, but this does not mean that there is a standard pattern that fits any situation for all bands and all first nations.

Based on certain claims, depending upon the willingness of the various nations, some areas of responsibility can be transferred quickly and others not so quickly, while others yet would not be transferred not at all. It is rather difficult, when discussing self-government for first nations, to say: "Here is a complete, comprehensive and definitive profile of self-government". It will take shape as these kinds of agreements develop and it can vary from band to another.

So far, four first nations in the Yukon Territory have entered into agreements on both lands claims—these are covered by Bill C-33—and self-government.

These are the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun, the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

That still leaves about 10 nations. The minister said that, during the year, we may indeed conclude and ratify agreements with five other nations. I think the fact that we may complete these negotiations within five years is a good sign and that it is the first step these nations must take to get rid of the Indian Act trusteeship although in fact—as I will explain later—they can opt for continued coverage under this act. I will explain some of its provisions a little later.

However, a number of preconditions are attached to self-government. As I pointed out a few minutes ago, the First Nations increasingly want to face themselves from the Indian Act trusteeship but they are a little afraid of what will replace it. I think a bill such as the one before us today shows that the Indian Act could be replaced with agreements enabling members of the First Nations to take control of their own destiny.

As a precondition, the First Nations must be willing to get rid of this trusteeship and to take control of their own future. The House of Commons, which has jurisdiction over this, must also recognize that this trusteeship must end and gradually give the First Nations the opportunity to take control of their own destiny. The will must also come from the House of Commons.

Last but not least among the preconditions—also the most important in my opinion—is mutual respect. This mutual respect is sometimes difficult to achieve. The agreements may not have been as difficult to negotiate, but this respect must still be maintained and cultivated on a day-to-day basis. We must mention it whenever such bills are tabled because the public often feels uncomfortable toward Natives and vice versa. I think that if we want to spread the beneficial effects of these agreements, we must achieve mutual respect. That is not always easy.

As we know, our vision of democracy as we experience it here today is not necessarily that favoured by the First Nations. They are not too familiar with the concept of delegated voting. Does that mean that their vision of democracy is not as valid as ours? I do not think so. It is just a little different and we must respect it.

We have a common law system and a civil law system based on property rights to land among other things. We are not used to letting our neighbours move their trees 15 or 20 feet onto our lands without saying anything.

• (1635)

We must understand that, from the natives' point of view, the land does not belong to them; they belong to the land. So the way they see things is somewhat different and often very different