

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF HIS EXCELLENCY MR. GEORGES
RAWIRI, VICE-PRESIDENT OF GABON

Madam Speaker: I am pleased to draw the attention of the House to the distinguished presence in our gallery of His Excellency Mr. Georges Rawiri, Vice-President of Gabon.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

LAND CLAIMS SUBMITTED BY HAIDA, NUUCHAHNULTH AND
HEILTSUK

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In the fall of 1980 three Indian nations on the Pacific coast, the Haida, Nuuchahnulth, and the Heiltsuk submitted land claims. One and a half years later they have not been told whether or not these claims have been accepted for negotiation. Last fall departmental officials said they would be told as soon as the Department of Justice had reviewed them. Can the minister tell the House today whether these claims have been accepted, and will he assure the people involved that there will be no offshore drilling for oil or gas until these claims have been settled?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member may be aware, there has been more progress with respect to the acceptance and negotiation of land claims in the last year and a half than there has been in the entire history of Canada. With respect to these particular claims, there is no doubt about the complexities involved. I will check to see when Justice will be ready to give an indication one way or the other. I am fully aware of some of the concerns of the Indians involved, and will try to inform the hon. member as soon as I can. That decision is not yet ready.

KASKA DENA CLAIM IN NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): After one and a half years these people are entitled to an answer. Two weeks ago the Kaska Dena Council submitted a comprehensive land claim for northern British Columbia. Since the Kaska Dena people are threatened by the impact of two megaprojects, the Alaska Highway natural gas pipeline and the proposed Liard power project, will the minister promise the House that these people will not have to wait a year and a half for an answer to their claims? Also, will he guarantee that neither of these megaprojects will proceed before their claim is settled?

Privilege—Mr. Domm

• (1500)

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, it is not within my competence, or perhaps even within the federal government's competence, to state right here that we can stop megaprojects. I would imagine that the B.C. government might have some considerable say with respect to what goes on in terms of the jurisdiction of that government with respect to megaprojects.

I can tell you that the Kaska people were in, and there is no doubt about it that the two megaprojects to which the hon. member makes reference will certainly have significant impact on the traditional lifestyles of the Kaska people. I indicated to them that I would tell the Department of Justice of the urgency of the situation and that some indication should be given because of that fact.

The other situation concerns moneys being made available to the Kaska people to study the potential impact of these megaprojects. We have made some moneys available to them for that purpose. I am looking at the prospect of making further moneys available to them for that purpose next year. They also indicated that if the megaprojects do go ahead they would want to have some economic development moneys in order to be in a position to participate in the employment opportunities afforded. This is in addition to the impact moneys. I indicated we would look sympathetically upon that.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. DOMM—ALLEGED CONTEMPTUOUS COMMENTS MADE BY
PUBLIC SERVANT—RULING BY MADAM SPEAKER

Madam Speaker: On Wednesday, February 24, the hon. member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm) raised a question of privilege arising out of certain words spoken by two employees of the Metric Commission. The first problem I have with this question of privilege is that it does not appear to have been raised at the earliest opportunity. However, after taking the matter under advisement I am now prepared to deal with it.

The hon. member names two people in his submission, both employed by the Metric Commission and both, according to the hon. member, used words which the hon. member found to be objectionable.

The question whether the use of such language against a member of Parliament by public employees warrants their dismissal is not a matter for the Chair. I am concerned only with whether the matter should be given precedence over other business so that the House can deal with it immediately.

As the hon. member recognized in his submission, in order to constitute a contempt or breach of privilege, words reflecting on Members of Parliament must, in the the words of Erskine May, "concern the character or conduct of the member in that capacity". On page 136 of May's nineteenth edition, we also find the following: