

*Indian Affairs*

word, irresponsibly; the real danger is that the native people cannot be expected to put up forever with this kind of duplicity. No group would. But the native people have before them the temptation to respond with violence when gentler methods fail. They have the lessons of other countries where other minorities have felt they were being deceived, and so responded violently.

I think the minister drew a red herring deliberately when he suggested because there are regional differences we cannot act in support of this resolution, indicating a commitment to the principal concept of aboriginal rights. There is a need to establish aboriginal rights under a national policy which recognizes the elementary principle that aboriginal rights exist. It is simply a falsehood, I suggest, to say that we cannot proceed now to enunciate that commitment of having a national policy because individual settlements that might occur will differ from region to region.

It seems to me the one remarkable fact about Canada's native leadership is the strength with which they have resisted the temptation to abandon consultation. They have put up with far more than many other groups in Canada would have accepted. I ask if you can imagine the Canadian Labour Congress or the Canadian Chamber of Commerce coming back in good faith to deal with a government which has consistently deceived them? Yet the native people, with their present leadership, have come back and are prepared to negotiate in good faith in spite of the way they have been treated before. I simply suggest that their moderate response cannot be counted on forever.

There is a matter related to this which I want to raise. It has to do with the fear, by many white Canadians, that Canadian Indians have been so broken down by the paternalism of the department they will never be able to stand on their own feet. If that is true, it is a tragedy. If it is not true and if, as we believe, people who have been victimized by paternalism can be brought back to pride and independence, then surely it is time to start. If we hope to end a system of paternalism whose cost is extravagant both in dollars and in dignity, surely we must begin by dealing seriously with the native people. That is what this resolution proposes, a beginning. It proposes simply the recognition of a concept of aboriginal rights and a recognition that there is a claim here to be settled.

The minister, for reasons of his own, is proposing that the resolution involves much more than that. In his celebrated television interview he said, "There are some cities that have been built on land that is perhaps not Canadian land." He went on to suggest that there might be a claim for the whole of the province of British Columbia. That is simply a scare tactic. It is simply a device, well known in this parliament and that party, of taking the most extreme possible consequence, pretending it is the norm and using it to scare people, thus avoiding honest debate. This is the resort either of a desperate government which knows it has no case, or an arrogant government which does not care about the facts and which would dismiss contrary opinion by saying, as the minister said of one of his colleagues during that television interview, "He does not know very much."

[Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain).]

The tragedy is that the minister can scare Canadians. If he wants to arouse false fears, this clearly is an issue where he can do so. Not only can he arouse fears, he can animate a prejudice against native people which we would be some time settling down. I personally hope the minister will abandon that course on which he has begun and will focus on the issues we must face, rather than the fears he can arouse.

I want to repeat the fact that acceptance of this resolution means only the acceptance of the concept of aboriginal rights. No cities are in danger. No province is to be given back to the Indians. At this stage there is not even a commitment to dollars; there is simply a commitment to deal in good faith and as equals with people who have claims older than any other claims this parliament considers.

This will be a long process, a process of years rather than months. That is one reason it is so urgent to make a formal beginning now and not to continue to delay.

The issues involved are serious. The settlement, when it comes, could involve the payment of millions of dollars—the end of the costly and colonial dominion of the department of Indian Affairs, the recognition of historic rights and the re-establishment of the dignity and sense of worth of hundreds of thousands of native people whom our society has abused.

These issues are more than serious; they are also inescapable. At some time some parliament of Canada must face the issues involved in aboriginal rights. No magic is going to spirit these issues away and no mere lawyer, even if he is also a prime minister, is going to dismiss them with ingenious argument, because these issues are based on claims which are rooted in the history of the country and perhaps in her conscience. If they cannot be resolved by negotiation, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and goodwill, they will arise in other more inflammatory ways.

So the real question about aboriginal rights is not whether we will face them, but when and in what spirit. Delay might appear to buy time, but it is more likely simply to destroy the good will which still characterizes most of the native leaders of Canada, in spite of the treatment which too often they have received.

Of course, the people who must be convinced about aboriginal rights are not the native people but the whites. The time will come when parliament and the government will have to advise native leaders about certain realities within the white community, namely, what we think we can afford. No doubt that will be difficult, although it will be easier if native leadership is reasonable, as generally it is today, than it would be if we drive out reasonable leadership.

But the case which the government and parliament must make today is to the white Canada, and there is no doubt that many Canadians outside the native community are concerned about the concept of aboriginal rights. I think their concern is based upon two fears: first, a fear that any settlement might be too extravagant for the national treasury to bear; and second, a fear that any payments made under a settlement would be wasted, spent foolishly by people who have not yet learned to