

Supply

It is funny for me to say this because I can tell you this, if the Prime Minister called an election on the Senate and its abolition because he cannot get agreement on a constitutional package, I certainly could not be campaigning against him on the abolition of the Senate because I think that is what we should have. I think 80 per cent of Canadians would go for it.

Madam Speaker, you have been very tolerant. I have many other things to say but that shows you how terrified I am about all these issues here. There are many other members who want to speak. It is difficult to get in all of these views in the narrow timeframe I have.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Madam Speaker, I have heard the honourable and dare I say venerable member on two or three occasions raise this topic without a great deal of clarity about what the question really is.

The hon. member cites an article in *The Gazette* and he cites a court judgment in British Columbia, both of which have in common that they have paid not an iota of attention to the entire debate on the question of what the inherent right to aboriginal self-government is and has been accepted to be.

For the hon. member's edification, it is simply this. When the Europeans came to North America, the native people did not expect they would do anything but share this continent with the visitors. They were generous about it, generous in a fashion which was uncharacteristic of Europeans who thought they had a proprietary right over all that was there. That impetus from a different culture led to an effective colonization of the native people even though they had never conceded the land or their right to govern themselves.

In fact, the signing of treaties signifies precisely that the Crown recognized they had a right to govern themselves, which was inherent because it is a characteristic shared by all people, European or aboriginal.

I do not understand why it is so—difficult for people to understand something so elementary and something that they assume for themselves, except that they assume it for themselves at the expense of the native people and have done so ever since the Europeans arrived here.

What has happened here is that early negotiation, the arrangements that resulted, led virtually to the destruction of the native society, to poverty, to dependency, to paternalism, and they want it to end. I think most Canadians would like to see it end.

In fact, if I recall correctly, there is a poll that says 70 per cent of Canadians would like to see the native people negotiated with on the basis of the recognition of inherent right self-government, which includes one other characteristic that should not be too difficult for people to understand, and that is the assumption of equality in negotiation. Not another thing is assumed.

That judge in British Columbia and that writer in *The Gazette* refused to recognize this. The difficulty with the hon. member is that he is paying too much attention to a judge and to a *Gazette* writer rather than taking the time to talk directly to the native people. He should not be asking that question in this House. I suggest that he sit down with native people and discuss it in those terms.

He would be then, as has been the case with those engaged in the negotiations now, in a position to understand what is being discussed. He would understand that the native people want the same rights as everybody else on land which they have never conceded, but they want to do it as Canadians.

If we persist in looking at what they asked for as something alien instead of something inherently human then this kind of strange question, certainly strange to their ears, will continue to be asked.

As for the 13 colonies and their arrangement for an equal Senate, the hon. member ought to know that the equal Senate in the United States is no magical solution there either as it will not be in Canada. For example, in the United States right now it takes an average of three years to pass legislation. I am not so sure that is the kind of thing that we want to have here.

That is a partial answer to the question, but I would ask the member if he has done that. Has he made any effort to sit down with native people and ask them instead of a judge or a *Gazette* writer about the issue of inherent self-government? Has he explored the impact in the United States, not of the great disparities in population on the function of government there, but the effect of having two houses of virtually equal power in which one is equally distributed and the other is by popular election?