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negotiation and mutual respect that we will be able to do that. It will not work through an all or nothing approach.

We cannot leave the resolution of the issues for those who have little respect for the law. That is what worries me about the resolution. It astonishes me that a member of the third party would bring forward a resolution suggesting that this issue be pushed over for a couple of years. Basically that is the suggestion.

• (1350)

I have listened to the passionate intensity with which members of the third party speak in the House about the rights of their constituents, about their need to defend their constituents, and about how their rights are not being properly regarded by the government and by the ways in which the laws of the country apply.

What would they advocate to their constituents about the resolution of their essential rights, how their lives will be conducted and how they will be able to earn their living? These rights have been in abeyance in some cases for 30, 40 or 50 frustrating years. Would they go back to their constituents and suggest that they just sit still and put this off? I find that difficult to believe. I do not believe they would do that. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. We should not be treating the aboriginal peoples of the country or of the province of British Columbia any differently than we treat other citizens in this respect.

We have a B.C. Treaty Commission. It establishes a solid foundation for consultation and reconciliation. At the heart of its operations are the coexistence approach and consultative approach. There are those in the House and those in the community who would maintain that the process concedes too much to First Nations. This too is starting to sow discontent.

I have heard radio shows in British Columbia. I have heard members say that 100 per cent of the province is covered by claims of the aboriginal peoples. However hon. members know better than this. We all know that claims are one thing, but to exaggerate them as a threat to the existence of the process is irresponsible. Claims are one thing. They are put forward but they can be resolved not necessarily in a court of law but in a framework of consultation, mutual respect and a desire to achieve a result that will be beneficial for all parties.

If that approach is taken, rather than an in terrorem approach of having huge claims, of the whole province being swamped and taken away from us, we would move toward a much more satisfactory resolution of the issue.

We know there are overlapping claims. The commission knows that is the case. They can be dealt with. We will not move forward by leaving the issue fester for another two years, until after another provincial government election; pushing it off into

the future; and allowing the distrust, mistrust and exaggerations on both sides to prevail.

For those reasons I urge the House not to adopt an all or nothing approach. We should give to the British Columbia Treaty Commission its right to facilitate modern day treaties, to assess the readiness of parties to begin the negotiations, to allocate negotiation funding to aboriginal peoples, to assist parties to obtain dispute resolution services at the request of all parties and to monitor the status of negotiations.

In that way we could move the issue onward and start the process of achieving an equitable, just and lasting resolution of an issue that is extraordinarily important not only to the citizens of British Columbia but all citizens of the country who wish to see a harmonious social climate in which to operate.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite attentively to my hon. colleague's comments about the Reform motion that has been put forward today.

We really have to describe the reason behind it. Perhaps we have not been explicit enough in explaining it. We feel very strongly that the British Columbia government at this time lacks credibility and does not have the confidence of the B.C. people to continue to proclaim it has a mandate to bring about some very comprehensive claims agreements and new treaties for British Columbia.

I listened to the member say that trust was absent in British Columbia. Certainly it is, but we have to ask why it is absent. I assert that it is because of the bungling of both provincial and federal governments in the past.

• (1355)

Given the claims in the territories which in the opinion of a great many Canadians were very generous, is it any wonder there is concern among Canadians about the extent of the claims in British Columbia?

Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a complicated issue. The first part of the issue concerns the governance of the country. He is saying that his sense of the political process in British Columbia or that of observers is that the present government lacks credibility.

I do not disagree the present government in British Columbia is in political difficulty. We live in a process whereby that government was elected for a certain term and has certain obligations to serve the people of British Columbia. This is not a new policy that has been brought forward. The argument would stand better both with the public and with the political process if this were some radical departure the present government was proposing, if it were something in the extreme. That is not what is happening.