

Indian Act

Indians. I would charge the Minister with the objective in future revisions that we should be able to eliminate the classifications of Indian people to the point where there will just be the one classification, namely those people who are Indians and members of a band and who are recognized as Indians and band members by virtue of the due process operation of the membership code of the band to which they belong.

There are major funding issues that have not been addressed in the Bill. They have been touched on. Other issues include population on reserves, equity, delivery of the same programs to all members of a particular band residing on the reserve, the inadequacy of housing, the differential way in which people are to be reinstated which leads to those different classes of Indians that have been mentioned.

We must indeed hope that this is the last time that legislation will further divide Indian people and that all future legislation will be designed to lessen those divisions rather than create new divisions and in some ways also perpetuate old divisions, which is what we have seen.

Let me quote further from the resolution of the Chiefs of Ontario regarding Bill C-31. "Each First Nation will establish membership codes. Each First Nation shall establish an appeal mechanism". I believe that the commitment of Indian people to the establishment of membership codes and appeal mechanisms is of paramount importance because it is a commitment that is made, regardless of what action is taken or not taken by Parliament.

This is a point on which I would like to expand further. The fact is that Indian nations today are formulating their own membership codes or citizenship codes. They will be doing this obviously with an eye to legislation and an eye to the decisions of Parliament. However, they will be doing it in the free exercise of their independent right. As the Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger) observes, they never abrogated their free independent right to determine their own citizenship. Indian people have come a very long way since the time when Government was personified as the "Great White Mother" in the treaties. I use the term "Great White Mother" advisedly because the majority of Indian people in Canada today are in treaties that were signed in the time of Queen Victoria. Indian people today are very well cognizant of what the federal Government can do to their lives and what the federal Government is not able to do to their lives. It is in appreciation of those parameters that they are, themselves, developing those membership codes.

I received a telephone call from Chief Charlie Nash of one of the bands in my riding, instancing the reservations that the Chiefs of Ontario had placed in their resolution. I would like to have read the entire resolution into the record, but it would take too long to do so.

● (1700)

I understand there is in my riding today a petition circulating against Bill C-31 instancing, of course, the degree to which Bill C-31 abrogates the inherent life of Indian First Nations to determine their own membership. Nevertheless, I think I have

to say that we must remember the dictum, I believe of Clausewitz, *Das Politik ist der Pratik von das Möglichkeit*, translated normally into English as politics is the art of the possible.

We have been presented in the continued operation of the former Indian Act, the way in which it divided Indian people and the way in which it controlled virtually every aspect of life in a fashion that otherwise would not be permissible in a democratic society, with a Gordian knot, such that Alexander solved by completely severing it. That is not an option possible to us.

We must in the best spirit and the best faith possible do our best to unravel that knot. It is in the context of unravelling that knot that I would say Bill C-31, for all its deficiencies and drawbacks, is nevertheless a first step that has been worthwhile taking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Are there any questions or comments? Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to and Bill read the third time and passed.

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BORROWING AUTHORITY ACT, 1985-86 (No. 2)

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed from Tuesday, May 28, consideration of the motion of Miss MacDonald (for the Minister of State (Finance)) that Bill C-51, an Act to provide borrowing authority, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I have a few remarks concerning this Bill and the Government's request to the House for borrowing authority as it relates to the Government's programs for this year. Before I get to the subject matter of the Bill, let me say that the Canadian public is rallying behind the demand by senior citizens not to have their pensions deindexed. I believe this feeling goes far beyond that one policy of the Government as announced in the Budget.

Let us examine what happened as far as the Government's spending program is concerned for this year. Certain decisions were made last November and last October in an effort to reduce the amount of money required by the Government of Canada in the normal operation of the Government. I refer specifically to actions that did not receive very much attention nationally and that did not receive very much attention in the House of Commons. For example, when the decision was made in an effort to save money so that the books of the Government of Canada would not look, as it claimed, all that bad, the