

We took their children and put them in residential schools. We had people running these facilities who sexually and physically abused their children. We told those native children that it was shameful to remember their culture or to speak their own language. We went one step further: We established the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and created a social welfare state. We removed from them every single ounce of dignity. We destroyed them as a people.

One young chief rose at a Dene Nation meeting in front of some 30 chiefs and said: "Senator, go back to Ottawa and tell these people we do not need gun control. I am the chief and there are only two of us in the tribe who are sober. The rest, elders and everyone, are under the influence. We need alcohol and substance control. Gun control is not part of our problem and it never has been."

Then we have our prison communities: In Stony Mountain prison in Manitoba, 55 per cent of the population is native, but only 7 per cent of the provincial population is native. My friends, we now want to criminalize them even further for not registering their tools.

The native people can hardly believe that this is happening. Senator Lucier can tell you about the elders in the Yukon who spoke to us, each one from the bottom of his heart. They did not make fancy speeches on the egregious errors or the temerity of this bill; they told us, in the most basic terms, how this bill will impact upon them negatively.

• (2200)

Why are we doing this? One senator told me that we will give them a break and only charge them with a summary offence and, on the second offence, they will become criminals. These people do not understand why they would be charged in the first place. They would logically commit the offence again because they would figure they were doing the right thing. Yet we want to criminalize and incarcerate them.

Honourable senators, this is the most horrible piece of legislation that we could impose on these people. It is totally unacceptable.

I do not know what the government is thinking. I was looking at the smug bureaucrat who sat beside the minister when he appeared before our committee. We asked them about consultation with natives. In our travels, we asked those who appeared before us about consultation. We heard in committee before we left that they had not been consulted. We were told this by Matthew Coon Come, Chief Erasmus and Ovide Mercredi — all of them told us that they had not been consulted. I said to the minister, "Why were they not consulted?" The minister provided us with a list of those with whom they consulted. The natives told us, "Our name is there but they never talked to us."

The bureaucrats at DIAND know better, just like all the other bureaucrats. They know what these people need. In spite of the fact that we have virtually annihilated them, we are still going at it.

Honourable senators, I wanted to change the amendment to include consultation for 12 months before the passage of this legislation. I was told that this would be seen as hoisting the bill. I understand that. I do not want to hoist any bills. I do not want to delay the legislation. I just want to see good legislation.

Honourable senators have talked about Kim Campbell's bill. I did not agree with it, either. All I want to do is deal with things logically. I do not believe that we are exercising logic in dealing with our native communities.

I would like to finish off by saying what I think this piece of legislation will do to our country. I was elected to the House of Commons in 1983. I did not know a living, breathing Tory when I got into this business. At the time I came into Parliament, I could see problems developing on the horizon as far as the unity of this country was concerned. I see four provinces and two territories representing 80 per cent of the land mass and 56 per cent of the population of this country saying, "This is not good legislation. This is not enforceable. We will comply with it if we are forced to."

Honourable senators, we are developing a wedge like the one that has developed in Quebec. It is not the same thing, but it is a division. It is divisiveness that I do not believe this country needs at this point in time.

I was told that the reason Quebec was allowed to hold a referendum in 1980 was that a duly-elected legislative assembly in that province wanted to exercise its democratic rights. Another referendum was held in 1995. What is wrong with the legislative assemblies of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Yukon? Why are we not paying heed to what these people are saying? These people are not supporting any criminal activity. What they are doing is representing their regions. Until we recognize the diversity of this country, we are destined to destroy it.

I can understand why Quebec is where it is today. I can also understand what will happen if we continue along this track and continue to ignore the likes of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, the territories and Yukon.

In closing, the minister quoted his Liberal friend, the Attorney General of P.E.I. What a coincidence; they are both Liberals and they both have their own special view of Canada, which is basically the same view. There is more to Canada than P.E.I. and downtown Toronto: just ask Chief Erasmus, Mike Dudar from Ethelbert, Manitoba, Mayor Gary Pollock from Swan Hills, Alberta, or Jim Zimmerman from the Kootenays. These people are Canadians. They have a different view of what Canada is all about and what it is to be a Canadian.

Maybe we should ask the Quebecers. Instead of the manipulation that took place with them, how different would it be if the Constitution had not been patriated without them being a signatory to the document? Had the Meech Lake Accord gone ahead, perhaps today we would be a stronger country.