

Supply

While I did not attend the officials' meeting, I understand it has changed somewhat. It attempted to provide both a contingent and an inherent right to appear in the stand alone provision. I do not know whether that will achieve the required support of the provinces.

There has not been a proposal put forward in the meetings that has not been supported by the federal Government when it came to trying to bring consensus from all sides of the table. We discussed the proposal by the Assembly of First Nations and allowed the provinces to respond to that. There was the first proposal put forward by the federal Government on which we attempted to get a consensus. Now there is the Nova Scotia proposal on which we are trying to achieve consensus.

It is important to recognize that the Government has worked very hard on this since 1985. The Prime Minister has made a commitment to bring the necessary consensus to give constitutional protection to aboriginal self-government and make it a reality. The Ministers, who have been given that responsibility by the Prime Minister, have been working very hard over the months to fulfil that commitment.

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to take part in this very important debate this afternoon on the whole question of aboriginal self-government. I want to commend my friend and colleague, the Hon. Member for Kenora—Rainy River (Mr. Parry), for bringing this motion forward.

During the debate, the Liberal critic, my friend, the Hon. Member for Cochrane—Superior (Mr. Penner), stated that no Party has a perfect record when it comes to the question of aboriginal rights. That is quite true, but I want to state for the record that in all three cases where we have had provincial Governments led by the New Democratic Party we can be proud of the record achieved by those Governments.

For example, when Dave Barrett was the Premier of British Columbia between 1972 and 1975, he instituted a commission that was to look into the whole question of the cut-off lands. Since then, Dave Barrett and the New Democratic Party of British Columbia have recognized the right of aboriginal peoples to aboriginal title. It is the first time that any political Party in British Columbia has recognized that right. We recognize that and it is part of our policy, and when we become the Government it will form the cornerstone of our policy in working with the Indian people of British Columbia.

● (1710)

When Allan Blakeney was the Premier of Saskatchewan, he instituted a treaty entitlement process by which the Indian people of Saskatchewan covered by treaty were able to have access to more land as a result of their increased population. That was a process which the Indian people of Alberta very much wished they could have in their Conservative Province. In the Province of Manitoba, under Premier Pawley, thousands of native people are being trained in the limestone training program. In Manitoba we have the only treaty Indian

Minister in Canada, namely, Elijah Harper, the first and only. He has been an historical leader in the whole process of constitutional talks regarding aboriginal rights. We have nothing whatever to be ashamed of there. On the other hand, we can look at the Province of Ontario, which under a Conservative Government previously had a good record in support of the movement of the aboriginal peoples towards self-government and the entrenchment of their rights. Unfortunately, under the Liberal Government of Premier David Peterson, it seems to be taking a step backward. It refuses to recognize the inherent rights of Indian people to self-government or to aboriginal rights.

When we look at the question of aboriginal self-government, we see that this is something which must be addressed on many different levels. Certainly, there is a legal and constitutional level, and constitutional lawyers can argue back and forth as to what is involved. There are technical political discussions involved. It is important for everyone to recognize that there are at least 17 different players involved in the First Ministers' Conference which will take place at the end of this month. Simply to bring together 17 different players with their differing points of view is not an easy thing to do. Therefore, there are some very serious technical questions that have to be addressed.

There are economic problems because self-government is not something which is just a matter of drawing up a charter on a piece of paper and saying: "Okay. Go to it". There has to be an economic base for self-government. Therefore, this raises important questions.

Perhaps most fundamentally, there is a moral and emotional level at which this debate must take place. That, I believe, is where we have to begin. That is where I would like to begin this afternoon. If we can understand and accept aboriginal self-government at the moral and emotional level, then everything else can be worked out. If we do not understand and do not accept this at the moral and emotional level, then nothing will happen. It helps if we know some of the aboriginal people personally, if we have had the chance to sit down with them over a cup of tea, to go fishing with them, to walk a trapline or to attend some of their feasts and celebrations. Because of the nature of our work, parliamentarians have more opportunity for this kind of encounter than most other Canadians. Because of that we should be giving leadership in this whole area.

What if we never had this opportunity? What if we did not take advantage of it when we did have it? Does this mean that we simply turn our backs on this question and leave it to the small number of people who just happen to be interested? Is aboriginal self-government and aboriginal title the concern of just a few? I do not believe this can be our response because at the deepest level we need to relate to one another not as members of one nation or another, not as one ethnic group or another and not on the basis of class or gender. We need to relate to one another on the basis of our common humanity. The proper way for us to relate as one human being to another