

The Address—Mr. Allmand

I have a strong feeling that this government has a tendency to ignore Francophones outside of Quebec and Anglophones in Quebec. One has the impression that this Tory government supports the view that Quebec should be solely French and the rest of the country solely Anglophone. In that sense they seem to approve of the bill 101 philosophy.

I wish to remind them, because there are not too many opposite from Quebec, northern Ontario or northern New Brunswick, that Montreal is the third largest English speaking city in Canada and that Quebec is the fourth largest English speaking province in Canada. We have more Anglophones in Montreal and in Quebec than most of the provinces and we have been there longer. We are not a new phenomenon. There are more French Canadians in Ontario than there are in some of the maritime provinces.

These minority groups in provinces which have a linguistic majority in the other language are extremely important. Under our proposals, those language minorities would have been protected. I hope this government will do the same, but I have my doubts as a result of what they have done so far. I personally would like to warn the government that we will be here to ensure they do not forget us. Under no circumstances will we allow them to sell us out and to sell out other minorities in this country.

In my capacity as caucus chairman of Indian and northern affairs I have taken note of certain proposals in the Speech from the Throne, especially those which state it is the government's intention to propose amendments to the Indian Act. Or as the speech states "to correct inequities borne by some individuals". The intention is not too clear. I am not sure whether the Speech from the Throne is telling us they are going to make over-all amendments to the Indian Act, or whether they are talking about the problem of Indian women marrying non-Indian men and thereby losing their status.

● (1430)

In any case, as the critic for Indian affairs in this House on behalf of my party, I should like to know whether they intend to go forward with this amendment without the approval of the Indian people of the country. It has been our policy not to amend the Indian Act in the absence of the agreement of the Indian people with respect to the proposals. I intend to pursue this point. Are members opposite talking about specific amendments with respect to Indian women or the general emendation of the Indian Act? Do they intend to proceed without the approval of the Indian people?

I should also like to know whether the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Epp) agrees with the recent policy statement by the president of the National Indian Brotherhood that, if the Indian Act is amended with respect to Indian women so that they have the same status before the law as Indian men, that policy should be made retroactive and that the resources necessary to take care of all those new Indians should be provided. If we amend the act, as we should do to make sure that Indian women have the same rights as Indian men, there will be a lot more status Indians—double or triple

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the population of status Indians. If we are sincere about what we are doing, it means doubling reserve land and increasing the resources available to the Indian people of this country to take care of all those new status Indians.

With respect to aboriginal claims, we do not know where the government stands at the present time. I do know the minister has greatly upset the committee for original peoples entitlement in the Mackenzie Delta, the COPE organization, by suggesting he intends to re-examine the agreement in principle which was signed by the former minister for Indian affairs and the COPE organization. They do not know, now, whether they have any agreement or not. The government cancelled the last two meetings which were set with the Council of Yukon Indians to discuss their land claims. They have received the Nunavut proposal from the Inuit in the eastern Arctic but they have not expressed any reaction. The other day the Montagnais people of Quebec received a letter from the minister stating they had a prima facie case for their aboriginal claim but due to the fact that the government was reviewing its policy there was no money available to research their claim and it was not known what the outcome would be. I should like to know—and so would the Indian people—what policy the government intends to pursue with respect to aboriginal claims.

In conclusion, let me say that this Speech from the Throne is a complete disappointment. After waiting five months to call Parliament, the longest period in Canadian history in which Parliament has not met, we find only a commitment to more study and more confusion. Let me make this clear to the government: they did not have the support of the majority of Canadians voting in the last election; they do not hold a majority in this House. They should recognize those facts. This is a Parliament of minorities with respect to the parties. We in opposition intend to do everything possible to keep the government honest, to protect the national interest and, despite the administration's poor performance so far, to make sure we get good government in this country.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to take part in this throne speech debate. For me, it is a special honour to stand here today, for I came as an immigrant to this country. My parents came to Canada after experiencing the horrors of the last world war. They came in search of a peaceful place in which to raise their children and they found a home in Regina, Saskatchewan. It is therefore a special honour for me to stand here today as a representative of the community my parents chose as home and in which I was raised.

The community has all the rich social fabric which makes up our country today. Long before the Europeans came, Indians lived on the prairies hunting vast herds of buffalo. Then the explorers came, establishing missions and posts like Lebret and Fort Qu'Appelle. Later came the many waves of European settlers. They came from the Ukraine, the British Isles, Germany, Russia and many other lands. This heritage is all part of our community.