

Routine Proceedings

those people were treated under certain conditions as less than human.

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to ask my colleague a question. I will try to make it as short as I can in order for the hon. member to have a little time to answer it. This particular question relates to the fact that the government does not seem to be too interested in acknowledging the fact that the people were moved, specifically, for sovereignty reasons.

One of the reasons I would like to ask the member this question is because I come from a region very similar to the northern Quebec region from where these 15 families were moved. Lo and behold, these particular 15 families were moved to a region that is absolutely different from the region they came from.

They could have moved these 15 families, for example, to northern Ontario, where I come from, which has the same type of terrain, the same type of vegetation, the same types of animals, and the same types of berries to collect, and this would not have been devastating to their way of life. Could the hon. member try to explain why they chose the far Arctic versus northern Ontario, which would have given them the same kind of lifestyle?

Ms. Blondin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for bringing up that very good point. There is no way to explain why these people were not taken to a more favourable climate. There is only one explanation and that is one thing that the government will not recognize. These people were sent to the high Arctic for the express purpose of protecting Canadian high Arctic sovereignty, and that is it.

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to rise today to try to reveal the facts about the relocation of the Inuit families from Inukjuak to Grise Fiord and Resolute in 1953.

I would like to share the findings of the Hickling report with the Canadian people and see if, somehow, we can find the truth that exists somewhere between the memory and the cold written records of the past. It was in looking for this truth that the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development commissioned an independent study by an outside consultant. The consultant was asked to assess the factual basis of all of those

allegations that were made in the third report to Parliament by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs. It was felt that it was imperative that a detailed and impartial assessment of all of the facts be undertaken so that the department could prepare an objective and unbiased response, a full response, to these allegations and which had been requested by the standing committee.

Therefore the independent commission began its study. First it consulted with the Makivik Corporation, the organization that was set up under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement in 1975 to represent the interests of all of the Inuit of northern Quebec. That, of course, is where Inukjuak is located. With Makivik's agreement, the Hickling Corporation was contracted to conduct the study.

The Hickling project manager felt that, first of all, he must meet with departmental officials to review the history of the claim. This included various previous approaches that had been made by the Inuit Taparasiit of Canada and by the Makivik Corporation, requesting settlement of the claim and the responses by the department on those occasions.

The events leading up to the appearance of the Inuit before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, on March 19, 1990, the published proceedings of the committee meeting of that date, and the ensuing interim response by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, were also examined in this investigation.

In addition, the Hickling team sought the assistance of the Government of the Northwest Territories in searching the files for all the possible references to the relocation project. These files had been sent to the Government of the Northwest Territories in the transfer of federal responsibilities from the federal government to the Government of the Northwest Territories in the years from 1966 to 1970.

From all of these sources and after careful and detailed study, a report was developed. I would now like to share relevant sections of that report, from the executive summary of the report, with this House. I should remind hon. members that complete copies of the report are available from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development should any member wish to obtain one. The Hickling report states, and I quote: