

*Government Orders*

In addition to the limited number of claims the government is currently negotiating, there are hundreds of specific claims which remain unresolved and numerous comprehensive claims, most from British Columbia, which have never even made it to the negotiating table because the government refuses to deal with more than six claims at a time.

In many ways, I am bothered by the term "claims". I reject the implication or suggestion that aboriginal people are clamouring for something which the government may, in its generosity, give to us. We are not claiming anything from Canada. We are asserting what is rightfully ours; what belongs to us and what we are entitled to.

This government must understand that it is not doing us any favours when it enters into negotiations. It is we who are doing the government a favour by agreeing to sit down with them and determine how we will share with Canada, our land and our resources.

Most people in this country do not understand the land claims process. The government, in these negotiations, tries to keep the most it can. It gives up the least it has to. And it, for the most part, has held the big stick in these negotiations.

Many land claims negotiations have taken place under the threat of imminent resource development. Often settlements have been reached many years after developments have taken place and what the people have fought for has largely been turned over to someone else.

At times, the government has cut off negotiation funding or threatened to cut off funding when negotiations are not going its way. It has also threatened to stop negotiating altogether. In the negotiation of land claims, the aboriginal people have always been subjected to federal threats, intimidation and power plays.

Aboriginal people are saying "enough". We are standing on the power of our rights; rights which are affirmed in the Constitution of this country and which the Supreme Court has upheld. We have the power of the law on our side and the Government of Canada is subject to this law. Who determined that the Arctic was Canadian land? Were the Inuit ever asked? Where did the King of France get the right to give Mohawk land to Sulpician priests? These are the kinds of questions that Canadians must ask themselves. How would anyone feel, seeing the land you have lived and made your home on,

sold to others without your consent? How would you feel being squeezed onto smaller and smaller portions of land?

• (1610)

These kinds of expropriations without compensation have gone in this country since the arrival of the first Europeans. Last March, I asked the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development a question in the House of Commons about the reports of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

In 1988, the commission referred to the situation of the aboriginal people in this country as a national tragedy. In 1989, it said it had no reason to alter that judgment. I asked the minister at the time what immediate action the government was prepared to take to turn this tragedy around.

The minister gave the usual government response referring to how much money the government has spent, but at the same time agreeing with the human rights commissioner that the situation confronting the aboriginal people in this country needs to be vastly improved.

What has the government done to improve matters since I asked that question? Nothing, absolutely nothing. What the government has done is send in the army, between 3,000 and 4,000, to battle a group of 50 or less warriors.

From the beginning of the Oka crisis, the government tried to distance itself. It tried to absolve itself of any culpability and refused to accept any responsibility. An initial conflict over a golf course, a cemetery and sacred land escalated into a military confrontation the likes of which had never been seen in this country and which we hope will never be seen again.

The government's mismanagement of the Oka crisis has brought aboriginal people together in an unprecedented way.

In conclusion, we have all been shamed and diminished by the events in this summer of sorrow. But let us learn a lesson from this bitter experience. Force and violence solve nothing. They only breed more force and violence.

We need an independent commission of inquiry into the events at Oka, Kanasatake and Kahnawake estab-