

not taking anything away from the concerns of Senator Watt, and those later expressed by Senator Argue, there were two matters that he raised. He said that we do not know the total number of people to be brought back on to the list. In fact, we do know and the evidence has been that it is approximately 18,000. With respect to the concern for how it is regulated, the bill provides for band by-laws to regulate residency. With respect to the concern raised by him that we are rushing this bill through, this has been a matter of debate for a decade, and has been a matter of active parliamentary debate for almost three years.

I am pleased to report that the debate on this bill had no partisan element and honourable senators brought to it their special talents and special concerns.

Senator Watt: Honourable senators, is Senator Nurgitz closing the debate on this matter?

Senator Nurgitz: No. I was about to indicate that I was most touched and moved by Senator Marchand, whose special sensitivity and intelligence was most helpful in considering this matter. I am sure that most of us viewed him not just as a probing parliamentarian, but, in many ways, as a virtual witness.

• (1610)

Honourable senators, I think that this bill is a classic Canadian compromise. Both sides regret that it does not go further, but they value increasingly what it does provide. The key women's groups, in particular, while still wishing that the bill could have gone further, nevertheless urge us to act quickly on its passage.

Honourable senators, whatever its imperfections, Bill C-31 marks a turning point in federal Indian policy. It eliminates a sexist and assimilationist orientation which has permeated the Indian Act since its inception. Starting as soon as the bill receives Royal Assent, thousands of those who have struggled for years to regain their rights will finally have achieved their goal. Finally, in terms of the future, the bill takes a first and important step towards restoring Indian self-government by recognizing band control of membership.

Honourable senators, these are solid achievements. I venture to predict that when we review the implementation of this bill in two years' time, the essential fairness of its provisions will have been confirmed by experience. If not, we have all had the assurance of the minister that we will be back to the drawing-board. I am sure that, on that basis, we ought to proceed. The minister gave many practical undertakings with respect to implementation, and I will not go into them. I thought that Senator Fairbairn outlined ably what they were.

I urge all honourable senators to give their support at third reading so that the urgent work of healing old wounds can start immediately.

Senator Watt: Honourable senators, I realize that I have already spoken and that I can only speak once on third reading of this bill. That is according to the procedures of the Senate. Will the honourable senator, however, accept a question with respect to the bill?

Senator Nurgitz: I would be delighted to hear the question.

Senator Watt: There are two questions I would like to ask. Is the honourable senator aware that there were 19 different organizations which appeared as witnesses before the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on Indian Affairs and Northern Development and that they have wholeheartedly indicated that they would like to have further control in terms of membership?

Senator Nurgitz: Yes, I am aware of that.

Senator Watt: Honourable senators, I have another question in relation to this bill. May I ask it?

Senator Nurgitz: Of course.

Senator Watt: Would honourable senators accept further debate on this bill tomorrow?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): No, we cannot.

Senator Nurgitz: Honourable senators, my understanding is that this bill is to proceed to third reading today. However, I do not want to get into an argument with my friend. If he has asked whether I would be prepared to continue debate on this subject following the passage of the bill, my answer is yes.

Senator Watt: In that case, I move that the debate be adjourned—

Senator Nurgitz: No, that is not what I said. I said that I would be prepared to continue debate following passage of this bill. Honourable senators, I think there is no great dispute here on the matter of accomplishing what Senator Watt would like to accomplish. I regret that we cannot do so.

Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed, on division.

STATUTE LAW (CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS) AMENDMENT BILL

THIRD READING

Hon. Nathan Nurgitz moved the third reading of Bill C-27, to amend certain Acts having regard to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.

AERONAUTICS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

Hon. Finlay MacDonald moved the third reading of Bill C-36, to amend the Aeronautics Act.

Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.

SUPPLEMENTARY FISCAL EQUALIZATION PAYMENTS 1982-87 BILL

THIRD READING

Hon. William M. Kelly moved the third reading of Bill C-39, to provide for the making of supplementary fiscal equal-