

Supply

would seek the Hon. Member's assurance that he and his Party endorse the concept I outlined in part of my remarks, namely, that once we reach that important point, and perhaps even during this part of that process, the Council of the Haida Nation will be brought in and be a full partner, a completely equal partner, with the Government of Canada. Then in bilateral negotiations we should make sure that the rights of the Haida people are fully recognized and affirmed in the South Moresby area. They feel very strongly and I know the Hon. Member feels very strongly that that is the appropriate route we follow now.

We should complete this process of delineating the area of providing compensation to the province, to the forest companies, to the loggers and to the communities and put together a process of looking at the developments that can best deal with so-called tourism developments. The Member and his Party support—I am sure the Member does—the full involvement of the Council of the Haida Nation in the negotiations regarding rights in that area.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, let me say, in the style of one Joseph R. Smallwood, that we in the Liberal Party insist upon not the aspirations, not the wants, not the desires, not the feelings, not the mood but the rights of the Haida people. Intrinsic in using that word "rights" versus aspirations, desires, moods, wants, is the notion that something is provided, not as a matter of convenience, not as a matter of sensitivity, not as a matter of good intention but as a matter of right. That is precisely the kind of terminology we would apply to the role of the Haida people in finally resolving these negotiations.

Though I know the Member would understand if I add that while all of us in the House would use those kinds of words to articulate the role we see for the Haida people in these negotiations, none of us at this, I believe particularly happy stage, in what has been at least for more than a decade a long battle, would want to impose ourselves in the middle of whatever negotiations are ongoing.

I believe that we have seen evidence of serious and of constructive negotiations being carried on between the Minister of the Environment, the Premier of British Columbia, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Environment Minister for British Columbia, Mr. Strachan, who has had a few things to say in the last few days that sound positive. I know the Minister is certainly in touch with the representatives of the Haida people. He has consulted with them. That is as it should be.

While I want to assure the Hon. Member that we too share the notion of rights of the Haida people, those rights are more than merely aspirations or expressions of goodwill on the part of Governments. We believe as well that it is important now that the negotiation process be allowed to work, and that the job of Parliament is to give all-Party expression and non-partisan support to the determination to reach a successful conclusion to those negotiations that should and must include the Haida people.

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise in response to the motion of the Hon. Member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton). As all Members of the House are aware, the negotiations for the creation of a national park in the South Moresby area of the Queen Charlotte Islands of British Columbia have accelerated dramatically in the last few days and, indeed, hours. The very fact that the House of Commons is debating this motion, not just as a British Columbia question but as a national and an international one, underscores the keen interest of all Members of the House from all Parties. It reflects, too, the strong hold that that unique collection of islands has exerted in the consciousness of Canadians.

We owe it to ourselves, to the world community as a whole and to generations yet unborn to save what is the most internationally significant wilderness treasure in all of Canada. I do not exaggerate when I say that the eyes of the world are upon us. The Minister of the Environment from the remote island nation of Indonesia, Emil Salim, recently remarked to a Canadian journalist that he found it incomprehensible that an advanced, affluent nation like Canada would allow the loss of an ecological gem as precious as South Moresby. He asked, with profound insight, if Canada cannot save one small irreplaceable part of the world's heritage what help is there for the planet?

The area is one of genuine splendour, both for its ecological diversity and for its rich cultural heritage. South Moresby has been described as "an evolutionary showcase", as the "Canadian Galapagos". Scientists tell us that the islands remained ice-free during the Great Ice Age, allowing the survival of plants and animals species now found nowhere else in the world.

The islands speak to our genetic memory of a time primeval, towering Sitka spruce rise from the rich moss-laden earth, untouched by the ravages of time or man. Bald eagles, unique forms of black bear and pine marten populate the region, as they have since time itself began. Plants, lichens, birds, fish and insects not to be found elsewhere thrive in the lush environment of this Canadian Garden of Eden.

The cultural heritage of the area is no less awesome. The Haida nation thrived on those shores for thousands of years before Christopher Columbus set sail for the East Indies. Their numbers were tragically decimated by the ravages of white man's disease. But they left behind the signposts of a great culture, and the Haida nation tenaciously and proudly fights for the survival of that culture today. The artistic expression of their binding connection to nature can be seen in the fallen totems of the Ninstints, declared by UNESCO a world heritage site. Like the flora and the fauna of the islands, the Haida culture is unique.

I myself had the pleasure of touring South Moresby within weeks of my appointment as Canada's Minister of the Environment. Despite advance descriptions from people who had visited the islands before me, including other Members of the House of Commons, I was singularly unprepared for the magnificence of the islands: the awe-inspiring forest canopies,