

In contrast, honourable senators, the Government of Canada has set aside more than 180,000 square kilometres of land for national parks, nearly seven times more land for national parks than all Indian lands combined.

In Saskatchewan, there is twice as much park land set aside than there is for all Indian lands combined. Moreover, not an acre of land has been set aside for the Métis in Saskatchewan.

While we pride ourselves in being compassionate people and often measure ourselves against the United States, we possess no bragging rights when it comes to comparing land settlements in the United States and Canada. The United States has recognized Indian title over some 225,000 square kilometres of land, nearly nine times more land than we have recognized in Canada. Honourable senators, this is all the more disturbing when you consider that our country is much larger and our population is a small fraction of the population of the United States.

Honourable senators, while I am sure you will agree that the bill before us represents progress, it provides only a temporary refuge from the long hard work ahead in settling all outstanding aboriginal land claims.

I have a table that I put together, honourable senators, and with your permission I would like to table it. I have referred to some of the statistics. The table sets out the facts of land ownership in Canada according to population, and so on. In the table there are some rather unhappy statistics. I think it would be useful to include that along with my remarks.

There is a major outstanding land account that needs to be settled in this country. In Australia, the Aborigines say it is time to pay the rent. Well, our rent is long overdue.

We need to establish a new balance. We need to set new objectives. We all need to make a new commitment to the land agendas. When I first entered into Indian politics a long time ago, land was always at the top of our agenda.

There is no question that the Indian people in the province of British Columbia have the worst land deal of any aboriginal people in the country. That is why I could not understand why land was not dealt with more directly in the constitutional process. To my dismay, honourable senators, our priority land agenda was swept under the constitutional carpet. My own view is that many aboriginal people rejected the Charlottetown accord because it failed to adequately address land. I know that this was particularly true in the province of British Columbia where Indian reserves constitute only 0.36 per cent of the land area of that province.

We can, and must, deal with land if we are to make progress on the constitutional front, but we do not need a

constitutional process to settle the land issue. This bill is good evidence of that.

Honourable senators, while I strongly support this bill, I nonetheless believe it is necessary to examine the bill at committee to hear some of the concerns raised to date.

As you may be aware, Ron George of the Native Council of Canada has written to us raising some concerns with the bill. I believe it is important to hear the Native Council's views on this matter, as well as the department responsible for implementing the bill. I hope that we can hear from the minister and/or his officials when we refer the bill to committee.

I also want to closely examine the taxation provisions of the agreement to ensure that the bands are not unfairly taxed on the settlement agreement monies, particularly the principal and interest earned and held in trust, and the treaty land entitlement fund and its subsequent transfer to the bands.

In addition, I believe it would be informative to examine the provisions dealing with the riparian rights of the bands, particularly any impairment of the band's ability to influence water developments adjacent to Indian reserve lands.

Honourable senators, I also talked to Roland Crowe of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians and assured him that we intend to deal directly with the bill and at our earliest opportunity. I am confident that we can discharge our duties in a timely and mutually satisfactory manner.

I look forward to having this bill referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples. I look forward to it being sent to us as early as possible so that we can deal with it as early as possible.

In preparing my remarks, I did a little bit of background wondering and reading. If some of my colleagues want a good read on this whole subject of treaties, this book deals with Treaties 8 and 11. It is a book called *As Long as This Land Shall Last*, and it is written by René Fumoleau, OMI. It is a very worthwhile read. I was tempted to put some of the quotes in here about what went on. The process was rather sad in those days. There were language difficulties, as I referred to in my remarks just before Christmas when we dealt with the Gwich'in bill, and so on.

I can assure everyone here, and I am sure my honourable friends across the way from Saskatchewan can also assure everyone here, that the process entered into here and the negotiations that went on, were done with fairness and competence, certainly on the part of the FSIN, which I think is one of the most able Indian organizations in the country. They certainly would have made this deal with their eyes absolutely wide open. We can rest assured that they have made the best deal possible for those treaty nation bands involved in this agreement.