

Supply

been fair for other provinces in the past ought to be fair for Yukoners and people in the Northwest Territories today. We should all commit ourselves to Part 1 of this motion.

I would say parenthetically about the former Member for Yukon, a former Deputy Prime Minister, a man with whom I did not agree about an awful lot, and he would say the same thing if he were here today, that Mr. Erik Nielsen fought hard for the goal of Yukon eventually becoming a province. He made many speeches on that subject, both in this House and in Yukon. I have a suspicion that were he still a member of the Cabinet this kind of unacceptable proposal would not have been made. I will not say anymore on that.

The other point is that not only is there discrimination against the north in this respect, there seems to me to be an infringement of their legal rights in the provision in this Accord for the selection of new Senators. Far be it from me to praise the Senate and I certainly will not praise it as it now exists. However, if we are going to turn over to the provinces the right to select future Senators from their regions, then it seems to me logically, and I would have thought legally, necessary that those regions participate in the selection of their Senators in exactly the same way as the provinces.

I am not a lawyer. I have many other faults but that is not among them. However, I would think the legal case being made about differential rights in the Charter of Rights by the Northwest Territories and Yukon is a solid one. It seems to me that what is involved in this provision is a different set of rights. If you are a Canadian living anywhere other than north of 60, you have the right through your provincial Government to participate in the selection of Senators. Yet if you live north of 60 you do not have that right. I believe that discrimination ought to be corrected by this Parliament before the resolution is adopted.

● (1150)

I want to talk about Canada's aboriginal peoples. In March, we saw the conclusion of the fourth constitutionally required attempt by the First Ministers to deal with aboriginal rights. It was the last in a series of meetings that have been designed to redress a very important and profoundly sad historical wrong. As all Canadians know, that meeting ended in failure. It was indeed a sad day for Canada.

It was both sad and poignant for many of us who were not participating in the conference but saw the wind-up session and saw, in particular, the very distinguished, committed and very moving statements made by the leaders of the aboriginal peoples of Canada. They were speaking as leaders of aboriginal peoples, but also were making it clear that they were speaking in a fundamental way as Canadians. They were saying that they wanted to be brought in as part of the Canadian family.

I say that we should not at this time continue to ignore their claims and that we should positively make a commitment to resolve what failed to be resolved in March. We should be

making a commitment to have a First Ministers meeting on aboriginal rights, particularly on the question of self-government for aboriginal people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Following the failure of that meeting, the Prime Minister said: "It was with the greatest sadness that this was a moral obligation that has been unfulfilled by Canada, by the federal Government and by the provinces". He was alluding to the failure to establish within the Constitution the principle of aboriginal self-government. It is important that we deal justly with the ongoing injury of unfulfilled rights for our aboriginal peoples, particularly the right of self-government within Canada.

On behalf of my colleagues I said to the aboriginal leaders' conference in Toronto on February 5, that as a nation we ought to be proud of our federal system which, in historical terms in the modern world, is one of the earliest democracies. We were the first to really combine the principle of responsible government and federalism. We have had a positive, at times exuberant, history in terms of resolving constitutional differences which, in effect, are by-products of differences within society.

There is now an important opening of considerable historic significance to the Province of Quebec. We are adjusting our federal system in a realistic way that accords with the human reality as it exists in Quebec and Quebec's relations with the rest of Canada. We have shown that flexibility in our federal system. In this regard, we ought to be energetically committed to the ideal that the federal system in Canada must be further amended to incorporate within it, the aboriginal peoples of Canada with their own form of self-government.

I wrote to the Prime Minister on March 5, expressing my Party's desire for the Government to take the lead at the First Ministers' conference on aboriginal rights to be held later that month, and to work vigorously for an agreement. While I understand the Government's strategy of playing a consensus role, we wanted it to put a set of propositions forward that could have provided the foundation for the support from a number of provinces which could then jointly deal with the dissenting provincial Premiers. We know that rather than pursuing such a strategy, we saw a strategy of consensus building.

It is time that the federal Government took a more vigorous position, one that is clearly worked out and discussed with the leaders of the aboriginal peoples. It is time the Government took the initiative rather than wait for all ten provinces to be in agreement. It must formulate a package of proposals with the support of the majority of provinces who are on side in this important issue, significantly the Province of Quebec, and then work on the other provinces. I am sure that with the support of the vast majority of Canadians we can win.