

Indian Affairs

We have tried to offer some concrete solutions, and I hope that in our further study we will not become confused with different terms and with the semantics of the problem. We must try to correct any wrongdoings of previous administrations and offer the Indians a fair deal. Unfortunately, a lot of the implications we cannot escape. This is why I cannot agree with all the briefs that the Indians have presented. After all, these are negotiating positions and they do not expect us to accept them in their entirety. Their submissions are the basis for negotiation, and when you are negotiating you do not ask for the minimum but for the maximum. The committee could probably help me achieve a balanced judgment that would serve the best interest of all Canadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) wishes to ask a question, but he will need the consent of the House since the time allotted to the minister has expired.

Mr. Howard: No, Mr. Speaker, it was extended. Would the minister agree to answer a question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The minister's time had been extended, but that does not necessarily imply that all hon. members have the right to ask questions. Does the House agree that the hon. member for Skeena has the right to ask a question?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not agreed. The hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark).

Mr. Joe Clark (Rocky Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I think that since all parties in the House have now had an opportunity to express their views on this resolution, and since we are all anxious that it be brought to a vote as quickly as possible, if there is agreement in the House that we now proceed with the vote I am prepared to sit down.

Mr. Lalonde: If you have anything to say, say it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): I was not in the chair when the hon. member made his proposal, so would he please repeat it?

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my proposal was that if it was agreeable to the House that we proceed immediately with the vote, I will surrender my time and sit down now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The hon. member might make that suggestion, but it is not the responsibility of the Chair to find out whether another hon. member wishes to speak. I do not think the procedure that we have followed in the past should be forgotten, namely, that any member of the House is entitled to express his view on any subject matter before the House. If the hon. member wants to take the risk of not participating in the debate, he can do so.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I take it that my hon. friend in the Liberal ranks is rising to speak and

thus prevent a vote by talking the motion out, so I shall proceed.

I was interested to hear the minister say that his government had recognized the rights of the native people as never before. I am moved to comment that his method of recognition is so original that it is invisible. Certainly he has not been in touch with very many of the native groups which have made special recommendations. I have just had a note that the Union of British Columbia Chiefs have yet to hear from this government. Although the minister said he has been in touch with the province of British Columbia in regard to their representations, he has not been in touch with the native people themselves.

I also think it was a signal accomplishment for the minister to be able to speak beyond his time in this House without referring for one instant to the resolution that is before us, because what the resolution asks, and all that the resolution asks, is that this House recognize the concept of aboriginal rights so that the proceedings of the committee and the deliberations of this House will have some authority and we can proceed with our discussion knowing we are discussing something that has point to it, knowing that this is not just another aimless study of the matter.

I want to put this debate in context. I think we recognize, as my colleague from Kingston and The Islands (Miss MacDonald) has suggested, that governments in other countries are taking native claims seriously and are starting down the road to settlement at the very time that we in Canada, under this government, have been turning away from the road to settlement and backing away from some recognition of aboriginal rights.

I think we acknowledge, and without very much pride, that the native people of Canada in times past were victims of white trickery, when land rights and other rights were often traded for blankets, beads and other pittance. I suggest that the treatment accorded to our native people now is no less shameful. There has been the fraud of consultation in preparation for the white paper, now thankfully withdrawn. There has been the establishment of the claims commissioner who has to his credit now one settlement of one ammunition agreement concerning one treaty in Alberta, but who has clearly been established to delay settlements of claims, not advance them.

There has been the shameful treatment of native people in the area of James Bay, an area where the minister has a clear responsibility to help an unsophisticated group of native people who are threatened by a government-sponsored corporation. The minister's only response has been to give these people a little conscience money to get them into court, so that he and his colleagues can escape discussion of the question on the ground that it is *sub judice*. I hope that the minister might apply some of his own responsibilities to end native people's representations with the moral fervour that he has brought to the suggestions of the government of the province of Quebec regarding what they should do after the fact.

• (1710)

That is the context of trickery within which we now debate. I think the significance of that is not merely that the government is acting, if I may use the minister's own