

Supply

peoples, I felt that this further points to the need for our native peoples to be considered as equal partners in Confederation. In fact, before the Hon. Member's speech, the debate had centred mainly on the constitutional issue, and therefore I would like to ask the Hon. Member to give us some thoughts on that question. I am particularly interested in her analysis of the position of the Province of Ontario at the First Ministers' Conference to be held within two weeks. Could she give us, let us say a federal perspective on the current position of the Government of Ontario as described in newspapers and as explained to us at the standing committee by the great leaders of native organizations? Indeed, they say that this position is of no use to the aboriginal peoples, that it does not support the process, and they make a comparison between the present Government of Ontario and the previous administration which, during earlier First Ministers' Conferences, they saw as an ally in their quest for the advancement of native peoples.

• (1800)

Mrs. Tardif (Charlesbourg): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. With respect to the position of the Government of Ontario concerning the constitutional problem, I think it is under discussion, and that the Indian bands and the governments of the other provinces as well as the federal Government will have to react to various positions.

As the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development said earlier, what matters now is that the first proposal which was tabled by the federal Government, which was considered and which prompted the parties to seek concertation paved the way for another motion sponsored by the Province of Nova Scotia. All these debates on the constitutional aspect involved will continue during the conference at the end of this month. To me these problems are extremely important, and I can inform the Hon. Member, in case he is not aware of the fact, that I have an Indian reserve in my own riding. When I consider the co-operation during the last two years between the authorities on the reserve and the federal Government, I have to say that in most cases, I agree with giving increased autonomy and I think this must be done, because I can tell you, Indians are really proud when they have designed and implemented a project and can show their community what they can do.

I am thinking of a senior citizens' home that was built in my riding. The home is really the pride and joy of the whole village, because they built it and also had the idea in the first place. So I think that on the basis of all these facts, we must conclude that Indian bands must be autonomous and be answerable to their own communities, and that is the only way the money will be matched up with the priorities of the community. I am convinced that the native people living in my riding do not have the same needs and priorities as those of other reserves in Ontario or British Columbia, and I therefore think it is important that each community or local authority be able to determine its own needs.

Mr. Parry: Mr. Speaker, I think I visited the reserve in the riding of Charlesbourg not long ago, if we are talking about the Village Huron reserve. I can assure the Hon. Member that it is certainly quite different from any of the fifty-nine Indian reserves I have in my own riding. The Hon. Member mentioned the need to help native people be proud of themselves. In this respect, what are her views on the position taken by the Government of British Columbia which, for all practical purposes, denies that native rights exist in British Columbia and that the provincial Government has any responsibility to native people? It claims the federal Government is fully responsible for them. I wonder what the Hon. Member thinks the federal Government should do to make the Government of British Columbia change its position.

Mrs. Tardif (Charlesbourg): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I think it is important to have an honest and open debate and to have all parties involved. As in any matter where disputes have to be settled, if none of the parties are prepared to come part of the way to understand the other's position, I don't think we will ever get anywhere. In the specific case you refer to, I agree the situation in no way resembles that in my riding. There are very specific problems, and I think that in this particular case, negotiations may take a long time. When we have a provincial Government that is not prepared to make any concessions at all, I think something must be done. On the other hand, I must admit I am not very familiar with the present situation in British Columbia.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments. Debate. The Hon. Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud).

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Westmorland—Kent): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to take part in this debate on the motion now under consideration, which says the following:

That this House condemns the Government for its timid and unimaginative approach to the advancement of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, for its continuing failure to offer long term, fair, and just responses to the social, cultural, economic and political aspirations of Canada's First Nations, for its unwillingness to recognize and affirm the inherent rights to Aboriginal self-determination, and for thereby impeding the improvement of the health, heritage and economic well-being of present and future generations of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the text of this motion says a lot, and justifiably so.

Before my election to this House, I found it very hard to understand the problems and frustrations of the native communities in my region. Indeed, I could not understand why these people could never reach their goals and receive from the Government the attention they required and which the Government should in fact have given to their problems. I was not aware of all the treaties and agreements signed between the native people of my region and our ancestors and parents. Agreements were in fact signed which provided for mutual respect and for sharing the same territory in harmony.