

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 7, 1992

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

#### NATIONAL SOLIDARITY DAY FOR THE FIRST NATIONS ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops)** moved that Bill C-268, an act respecting a national solidarity day for the First Nations of Canada, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee in the Human Resources envelope.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to introduce Bill C-268 at second reading after some extensive but important consultations with the parties in this House after considerable discussion and consultation with aboriginal organizations and individuals throughout Canada.

I will be presenting petitions later today. I do not know whether there are hundreds of thousands of names, but there are certainly tens of thousands of names of aboriginal peoples from across the country who have signed a petition endorsing the general thrust of Bill C-268, an act respecting a national solidarity day for the First Nations of Canada.

I want to say right off the top that one of the positive aspects of this round of consultation was the suggestion for a change in the description of the bill. The explanatory note in the bill says that:

This bill would ensure that, in each and every year, the 21st day of June is known as the "Aboriginal Solidarity Day".

There was a suggestion that would be a more appropriate way to title the bill as well because referring specifically to First Nations is not as inclusive as the term aboriginal suggests. If the bill proceeds to a legislative committee, this could easily be clarified through an

appropriate amendment, making this bill more inclusive of all aboriginal people of Canada.

• (1110)

Today our country and aboriginal peoples are at a very crucial and critical point in the evolution of our history together. In terms of the movement now toward self-government, self-determination and self-reliance, aboriginal peoples have never been better poised for advancing these three causes and for advancing aboriginal cultures generally than they are today.

In the referendum process, one of the positive aspects enjoyed by many of us was working together with aboriginal organizations toward constitutional change which, in our judgment, would have enhanced the situation within Canada. It certainly would have enhanced the situation regarding aboriginal peoples. The leadership role played by Ovide Mercredi and other aboriginal leaders was nothing short of outstanding and extraordinary.

Personally, I had the opportunity of sharing almost all of the meetings, seminars, discussion groups and public forums with local aboriginal leaders in the Kamloops constituency.

I refer specifically to Chief Nathan Matthew who is not only chief of the Cheu Chua Band, the North Thompson Indian Band, but also the recently elected chief of the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council and also Chief Manny Jules from the Kamloops Indian Band. For many years now he has provided excellent and outstanding leadership along with his colleague, Nathan Matthew, toward advancing the cause of aboriginal peoples in British Columbia and throughout Canada generally.

I could also refer to a number of individuals representing different aboriginal communities, both reserve and off-reserve communities, who played outstanding leadership roles in the discussions on the referendum. They explained to the public what was meant by self-government, why it was important that aboriginal peoples become more self-determining and self-reliant and how this could be achieved in co-operation with the non-native communities. Their comments did a great deal in