

*Government Orders*

colonialism crumbled, imperialist policies started to fall apart, and then, the injunctions preventing aboriginal peoples from going to court naturally became null and void.

For the past 15 years, we have been trying again to find solutions through negotiations or through the courts, if negotiations are not possible.

I believe that the decision we will make today when we pass C-107, will be a vindication of this long struggle and will enable us to finally put an end to a history of confrontation which has plagued British Columbia for the past 150 years.

• (1650)

There is also an history to the commission. There was a report from a task force on claims in British Columbia and the creation of the commission was discussed at that time. The creators of that commission had really identified the need to enter into treaties with the first nations. I quote from that report: "that a new partnership be developed to recognize the importance of natives and first nations in Canada, based on voluntary negotiations well carried out, where natives, the provincial government and the federal government would be on an equal footing".

In September 1992, an agreement in principle was signed between the three authorities. This agreement implemented 19 recommendations made by the task force I mentioned earlier, including recommendation No. 3 which, at the time, called for the creation of the British Columbia Treaty Commission that was set up a little later and that we will confirm, because the federal government had not yet confirmed its participation, although that was happening in practice.

Today, or in the next few days, with the passing of Bill C-107, we will have confirmed the participation of the federal government in this issue.

In the history of the commission, it is also important to mention that at the provincial level, it is only in 1993 that British Columbia got its indian affairs department. That was long overdue, considering all the problems that exist in British Columbia. It was not long ago that the department was established. So, it is important today that we have a recognized department, a recognized minister in British Columbia, a counterpart of the federal minister to be able to thoroughly discuss the issues.

The First Nations Summit would also be a principal to the commission. The first nations have given themselves a negotiation tool called the Summit, which is part of the agreements leading to the commission. This Summit is very active and several of the groups that I was mentioning earlier are participants in the Summit and defend the interests of natives, which will lead, they hope, to treaties.

How does this work? There are six different steps in the process. I think that it is important to follow the course of these steps. The first stage consists in submitting a declaration of intent to negotiate. I will get back to this later on. Forty or so first nations have already done so.

The second stage is the one at which negotiation arrangements are made, first meetings held and evaluations conducted to determine if the first nations are prepared to negotiate. A first meeting takes place, where one group asks the other: "Are you ready to negotiate? How soon can we start?", and so on. A number of first nations, of whom I wanted to give you the list, are already at stage 2.

Stage 3 is the negotiation of a master agreement. The further along I get into this process, the less progress is made on these issues in terms of first nations's participation.

Stage 4 is the negotiation of an agreement in principle; stage 5, the negotiation of a definitive treaty; and stage 6, the implementation of the definitive treaty.

I told you that 43 first nations were taking part in the process. To date, 14 claims have passed stage 1. No individual group has gone further than stage 3 at this point in time. It should be noted however that the Nisga'as have taken an approach to negotiations that is different from the normal approach used by the commission. The Nisga'as negotiated for 27 years just to get to the equivalent of stage 3. Unfortunately, and I must digress here to say this, negotiations have stopped since.

As I indicated earlier, when the BC Premier was elected, he said that the issue had to be settled. Finally, they agreed to set up the commission. Now, we can see that, with a provincial election impending in British Columbia, the Premier is backtracking on his promises. The result is stalled negotiations with the Nisga'a, which in turn stalls the entire negotiation process with the other first nations of British Columbia.

• (1655)

Let us now turn to Quebec. We should wish to the BC first nations that their negotiations can eventually reach as advanced a stage as was reached in negotiations with their Quebec counterparts. Unlike British Columbia, Quebec has been signing modern treaties for the past 20 years, including the famous James Bay Agreement.

Twenty years ago, the Crees, the federal government and the Quebec government signed this historical agreement, which has become a standard agreement for the rest of Canada. More accurately, any time first nations seemed to be on the verge of achieving self-government or asked the federal government and their respective provincial government: "Could you spare a