

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I listened to my colleague from Edmonton East I could not help but get a sense of one reason the bill was going through the House so quickly and with so much co-operation. Obviously it is because of the tremendous team that has been put in place and the co-operation the team is bringing to the table not only in the sectors of tourism, mining, forestry, et cetera, but in all levels of government.

• (1530)

My community, which is downtown Toronto, is going through a very difficult time. The brotherhood of carpenters and joiners, the drywall lathing and installation workers, a very large union of about 2,800 members, has been on strike on and off since June and has voted recently to go on strike. Less than 1,000 members decided this. At a time when our economy needs to be working at full throttle we have in Toronto a situation in which the leadership and the various principals cannot seem to co-operate. The people who are affected by this, the thousands, are suffering.

Yet here in western Canada we see a beautiful example of all levels of government coming together. All the principal stakeholders and all the various sectors of the economy have come together. We see that a piece of legislation goes through the House in no time flat. The community in western Canada and ultimately all Canadians will be the beneficiaries.

I appeal to the leadership of that very strong union in my city to use this example in British Columbia as a possible model on how to get all of those people back to work in Toronto.

**Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Secretary of State (Training and Youth), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the debate on second reading of Bill C-107 regarding the establishment of the British Columbia Treaty Commission.

The negotiation of treaties offers Canadians a chance to look at the issue not only from a historical perspective but also from a modern reality. The tabling of this legislation on the British Columbia Treaty Commission gives us an opportunity to discuss the implications and the importance of treaty negotiations in B.C.

Members from British Columbia, including my hon. colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, understand only too well the importance of these negotiations. The history of British Columbia and the various interests speak for a process, in a sense beg for a process such as this.

This legislation reflects not only how current treaty negotiations are done but how critical they are. The situation we have today regarding negotiations is much different than when the numbered treaties on the prairies were settled. It bears discussion on the kind of relationship aboriginal people across the country have with their treaties.

I stand in the House of Commons as a representative of the Government of Canada and as an elected member for my constituents. I stand here also as someone whose whole life has essentially evolved around the whole issue of treaties in terms of the kinds of inalienable rights that aboriginal people have discussed, debated and put on their priority list throughout the years of discussing the Constitution and land settlements. The treaties have always arisen as a major priority.

If people have a sense of passion, a sense of direction and vision about their interpretation of the treaties, it comes from the fact that it is a much analysed subject but also very personal. My grandfather who is a chief, Zaul Blondin, was a signatory to Treaty 11. In that signatory I see many things not just for me but for the future of my people. In relation to British Columbia I can see the same kind of intent, the same kind of compassion, passion, dedication and determination about the process when it relates to not just one group but all of the groups. My frame of reference is from my experience. My experience is from the perspective of the First Nations.

• (1535)

I know the numbered treaties for the First Nations I referred to in my area, 8 and 11 in the Northwest Territories, set a very interesting perspective for the future of a people; the Dene people guided by these two treaties, the language itself, the immense vision by the people who signed those treaties, the people who had the vision. It was not colloquial. It was not parochial. It was not odd and simple. It was very visionary.

This language, as long as the grass grows, as long as the sun shines, as long as the rivers flow and as long as this land shall last, are not just words. They have given the opportunity for aboriginal young people to have post-secondary education. They have given the opportunity for people of aboriginal descent, no matter where they live and who are treaty, to have accorded to them the appropriate health programs and services to deal with taxation issues, health issues, hunting and fishing rights and related issues and issues still debated like housing. Those issues are being constantly debated.

The numbered treaties in the prairies were signed in advance of settlement. The government of the day sought to ensure that certainty and title were confirmed before Europeans settled in what are now Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Although certainty was the intention, the issue is yet much debated, the treaty is much debated, and most of the results are as of yet lacking definition or implementation and are not at all conclusive. That also begs for a process and hence we have the British Columbia one.

There needs to be certainty. There needs to be very clearly spelled out the future for aboriginal people. I have a document called "Sovereign Injustice—the Forcible Inclusion of the James Bay Crees and Cree Territory into a Sovereign Quebec". On page 5 it talks about the unilateral alteration of aboriginal treaties: