

Government Orders

As I mentioned before, in the private sector everybody in large unions gets the same rate of pay. In the House of Commons it could be argued that there is a bit of difference depending on where people live and their costs of living. The argument in northern Ontario is that the cost of food is higher and the cost of gas is higher. The cost of housing is much lower in Kenora—Rainy River than it is in Halifax, than it is in Toronto, than it is in Vancouver. It balances itself out in most cases.

The motion put by the member is a very good one and should be supported by the government and all members opposite to give people work and pay based on their abilities, their seniority and their classifications, not on where they live.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The time set for this debate expires at 12.10 p.m. Shall we call it 12.10 at this time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The time allocated for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1), the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BRITISH COLUMBIA TREATY COMMISSION ACT

The House resumed from October 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-107, an act respecting the establishment of the British Columbia Treaty Commission, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the debate on Bill C-107 to raise a couple of objections with regard to the way the bill has been presented to the House.

What we have here is enabling legislation that sets up the British Columbia Treaty Commission. At this point as we are debating this position in the House we have a British Columbia Treaty Commission. On the commission are certain representatives of the federal government who are making statements on behalf of the federal government. Yet there is no legal authority for them to do so.

My purpose this morning is not to debate the particular details of the bill but to draw to the attention of the people of Canada—and those listening to us this morning will recognize it—that the bill is based on a recommendation of the Governor General of Canada who recommends to the House of Commons

the appropriation of public revenue under the circumstances and the manner and for the purposes set out in a measure entitled an act respecting the establishment of the British Columbia Treaty Commission. Then the summary of the bill reads:

This enactment, together with an act of the Legislature of British Columbia and a resolution of the First Nations Summit, establishes the British Columbia Treaty Commission. That commission will facilitate in British Columbia the negotiation of treaties among first nations, Canada and British Columbia.

That is a major undertaking, a very serious and a very necessary issue that needs to be dealt with. I make it abundantly clear to everyone in the House this morning that my purpose in rising to speak against the bill is not the business of negotiating land claims and treaty settlements in British Columbia. That is not my purpose.

My purpose in rising concerns the issue of people going around the country without the legitimate authority of an act passed by Parliament. We should have settled the treaty business a long time ago.

Now the British Columbia legislature has passed legislation. The summit comprised of bands and various tribes among the aboriginal peoples has established a resolution that appoints certain people legitimately. However the House has gone beyond letting people go out there and do something without the legislative authority to do so.

This process disenfranchises the representatives of the House, of the people of Canada. It is wrong in principle and I object to it. I am not alone in that objection. Sitting on either side of me this morning are representatives of the constituency to the south, Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, and the constituency to the north, Okanagan—Shuswap. They too find it objectionable that the House should engage in the process of doing business in this manner.

The purpose of the act so clearly stated is to establish the British Columbia Treaty Commission as undertaken in the agreement. The agreement refers to the agreement reached by the summit, the province of British Columbia and Canada.

What does it do in terms of establishing the commission? Established by the joint operation of this act, an act of the legislature of British Columbia and a resolution of the summit, is the British Columbia Treaty Commission consisting of a chief commissioner and not more than four other commissioners.

There was nothing until now. Yet they are travelling around the province of British Columbia setting up meetings. There was a meeting in my constituency last week. They are acting as if they were representing and negotiating on behalf of the Government of Canada. According to this act they could not commit the government to anything.

An hon. member: Were there discussions?