

Inquiries of the Ministry

carry forward our discussion of this difficult problem. We must do so if the benefit of the Eskimo people is to be kept in mind.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask for the unanimous consent of the house in order to revert to motions so as to hear the statement of the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, in view of the great importance and urgency of the matter.

[*Text*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, since the standing orders allow a member to speak on a motion, I should like to say a few words in regard to the statement just made by the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Laing). He did not undertake nor conduct his negotiations properly—

Mr. Speaker, I hear the boos of the Liberals, but when negotiations are underway and a minister takes the liberty of making statements along the lines of those made by the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources at Winnipeg, I agree with what the Prime Minister himself recently said to the effect that it was a lack of judgment to make statements when negotiations are underway. I believe this statement by the Prime Minister may apply to the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources.

Now, negotiations are indeed underway and we see one of the negotiators making statements and throwing a monkey wrench into the proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, after listening to the statement just made by the minister it appears obvious that the kind of consultation carried on with the Eskimos is only an excuse to delay the negotiations now underway.

There is no doubt about one thing and the minister is aware of it: if there is any government in the country who has respected minority rights, it is the government of the province of Quebec, and one hundred years of history are there to prove it.

Mr. Speaker, the manner in which the federal minister has just replied to the Quebec minister was enough to reveal in what sort of atmosphere the negotiations are carried out. Instead of taking his share of responsibility, the one thing the federal minister insisted on doing was to accuse the Quebec

[Mr. Laing.]

minister. Only one thing must be taken into account. It has become impossible for the Quebec minister, Mr. Lévesque, to continue his negotiations with the federal minister, because the latter is indeed blocking those negotiations personally.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources should withdraw from the present negotiations and be replaced by someone better qualified than he is to bring to a final conclusion the transfer of the administration of Eskimo affairs into the hands of the Quebec government.

Those citizens must become full-fledged citizens, as residents of the province of Quebec, and I can assure all members of this house, including the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, that the province of Quebec has always respected, more than any other province, the rights of minorities concerning language, religion, etc.

[*Text*]

Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the statement made by the minister. We are sad that it does indicate a complete lacuna in the relationships between the two governments. I should like to point out that a very important dominion-provincial conference with regard to the Indians has already been postponed until the fall, and it is not a very happy augury to have one of the governments that will be involved in this later discussion taking the position that it is worthless to talk to the federal spokesman.

Having made these remarks, may I say that we still have a certain sympathy with the minister, and as much as we can appreciate his outline we agree with the position he has taken. The only other comment I should like to make from a party point of view is that it is very apparent that one of the greatest propaganda hoaxes of our time has been that the federal Liberal government and party are the only ones capable of getting along with the provincial Liberal government and party.

Mr. Graftey: The cold war now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lessard (Lake St. John): Mr. Speaker, I also wish to comment on the statement just made by the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Laing) because I feel that the temperature has gone up a little across the house. If I take, on one