

Housing

Mr. Oberle: I accuse him of having orchestrated the press gallery. I look up there and I see one Canadian Press reporter. There were 15 reporters listening to the minister using the native people to strengthen his position. He will hear more about this when the time comes. The same minister who was accused of having a loose tongue in this House has come back to pretend to be the spokesman for native people in this country. What a disgrace to take advantage of a situation like this, not making any reference to the question. The minister mentioned one lousy program. He made no reference to the speech of my hon. colleague. I serve notice on this minister that we will be back to him and have more questions to ask.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

● (1620)

Mr. Oberle: Don't snicker over there. This is serious. It is difficult to address ourselves to the question at hand, sitting across from that insidious bunch of people who are playing with the unity of this country.

Mr. MacFarlane: Stop calling names.

Mr. Oberle: If the hon. member has something to say, let him stand up and say it; or let him listen, in which case he might learn something.

Mr. MacFarlane: I have been sitting here, but that's all.

Mr. Oberle: Why would the official opposition take a whole day to discuss the subject of native housing if it were not a most important issue, one which strikes to the very root of our integrity and sense of responsibility? Indians have always recognized that owning houses or living in decent shelter is an inalienable right. The principle applies even more closely to a native person, because under our constitution it is established that Her Majesty the Queen, in right of Canada, has a responsibility to provide shelter for the Indian people, a responsibility which evolved from the Hudson Bay blanket theory.

We indulge in philosophical adventures, paying respect to a distinctive native culture. We encourage native people to rediscover and preserve their lifestyle and cultural heritage, though we do very little to help them in their task, which includes the integration of a house into their native culture. This means something very different for them than it does for a white person. This is why we need a native housing policy. The government has never understood this.

To an Indian, a house has a different significance because his cultural background is different. He lives a community-oriented lifestyle. He has stronger ties with his family. We started out by promising the Indian that he would be allowed to live his own lifestyle in perpetuity. That, of course, would mean living in harmony with nature, a dream we all knew would never be realized, a promise which would never be kept. But some of us have been less than honest with the Indian people. Then we talked about a development program through which the Indian would adjust to a new, western lifestyle. We

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used such phrases as "integration" and "assimilation". When you speak to an Indian about assimilation he has the picture of an eagle assimilating with a groundhog. That is the fundamental difference between our two cultures.

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Would the hon. member permit a question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Is the hon. member prepared to accept a question from the parliamentary secretary?

Mr. Oberle: We have heard enough nonsense from the other side of the House today. Perhaps he will wait until I have finished.

We maintain a department of government which is responsible for Indian affairs. This department was always concerned with shelter for Indians, or should have been, under the principle which evolved from the Hudson Bay blanket theory, as I mentioned. As late as 1969 it issued statements like the following:

To the extent that the national economy will permit, the Department of Indian Affairs is authorized to assist Indian people in securing suitable accommodation, including water and sanitary services, electrification and improved roads on reserves as well as roads linking reserves with adjacent communities.

Task forces, study groups and commissions have prepared mountains of paper which the native people could never understand. The native people have never—

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member seems to be making a point on native housing, but the motion before us today deals specifically with urban and rural native housing; it has nothing to do with housing on the reserves, to which the hon. member has been referring. Your Honour will notice that he keeps referring to Indian reserves and the conditions, sometimes pitiful, on those reserves.

An hon. Member: Cheap shot.

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): It was not a cheap shot; it was for clarification.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): I suggest to the parliamentary secretary that the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle) is well within the terms of the motion.

Mr. Oberle: In that connection, Mr. Speaker, I hope you will not count these interruptions against the time allotted to me. Obviously, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) has picked himself a parliamentary secretary who matches the disposition.

The relationship between our indigenous people and the government is like a modern Bible story. They feel their god has been offended by the new king who lives in this country. He has climbed up the mountain and shouted up to heaven, "I am the king." What he did was this: he confounded the language, so we now have two official languages in which we