

Supply

There have been many questions regarding the legal basis for settling comprehensive land claims and what their status is. I can say that the 1973 Supreme Court ruling in the Calder case acknowledged existence of aboriginal title in Canadian law. More recently in the Sparrow case the Supreme Court has recognized constitutionality protecting the aboriginal rights to fish for food.

Since 1973, as a result of a number of court rulings the Government of Canada has as a matter of policy negotiated settlements with aboriginal groups that assert aboriginal title and where there is some evidence of continuing title. The Constitution Act, 1982 affirms and recognizes existing aboriginal treaty rights.

We want to end uncertainty associated with unsettled land claims. By addressing it we produce certainty. The production of that certainty would result in jobs and investment and a healthier B.C. economy.

Various studies have indicated that \$1 billion in investment are forgone in the resource industries. Thousands of jobs could be made available if the treaty process were to be successfully conclude.

In terms of whether the people are representing their stakeholders, I would say that yes they are. Beyond that I would like to draw attention to the 31 members who are part of the treaty negotiations advisory committee. They virtually cover the whole section of the economic activity in British Columbia: the B.C. Shellfish Growers Association, the B.C. Fishing Resorts Association, sports fishing institutions, the Steelhead Society of B.C., the Union of B.C. Municipalities, the Community Fishing Industry Council, Fisheries Council of B.C., the United Fishermen, northern fishing representatives, the Interior Forest Industry Coalition. There is representation from the unions, the Industrial Woodworkers of America, a fine union I was a member of at one point. There is the B.C. Real Estate Association, the B.C. Federation of Agriculture and the list goes on and on.

It would seem to me that at some point we have to have some trust in the process. We have to end this injustice which has existed, and a costly injustice I might say. All studies have shown that economically British Columbia is suffering from the uncertainty. We want to establish some certainty on this question and give justice to the native people which I believe is long overdue.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that three government members have addressed our motion so far today. If memory serves me correctly, all three of them gave accolades to Mr. Jack Weisgerber, the leader of the B.C. Reform Party. I remember the hon. member's words: "I congratulate him for his vision and foresight". I would certainly agree that Mr. Weisgerber is a man with vision and foresight.

• (1340)

I would like to read into *Hansard* the following quote: "The vast majority of British Columbians rejected the backroom deal that was Charlottetown. They rejected the constitutional entrenchment of an undefined inherent right of self-government and so do I. They rejected a third order of government for native Canadians enshrined under the Constitution and so do I. We also reject the government's formal recognition of aboriginal title". That is from a speech given on October 4, 1995 by Mr. Jack Weisgerber, the leader of the B.C. Reform Party.

I wonder if the hon. member who is so free with accolades for this gentleman, which are richly deserved, would agree with those statements and that he truly is a man of vision and foresight.

Mr. Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, I referred to the decisions he made when he was a cabinet minister in the government of the Social Credit Party. Clearly, he is a perfect case in point as to how a reasonable person of the Social Credit Party can be transformed into a Reformer who does not make sense.

Mr. Bill Graham (Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on the motion put forward by the hon. member for North Island—Powell River. I oppose the motion. I consider it to be ill-conceived. Why do I take that position?

The first reason is that the correct approach to the issue was set out by the government in its red book promises. In the red book the government made it very clear that if we were elected we would be committed to building new partnerships with aboriginal peoples based on trust and mutual respect. We stated in the red book what a Liberal government would do.

We stated that our goal was a Canada where aboriginal people would enjoy a standard of living and quality of life and opportunity equal to those of other Canadians. It would be a Canada where First Nations, Inuit and Metis would live self-reliantly, secure in the knowledge of who they are as unique peoples. All Canadians would be enriched by aboriginal cultures and would be committed to the fair sharing of the potential of our nation. It would be a Canada where aboriginal people would have the positive option to live and work wherever they chose. Perhaps most important, we set out our goal for a Canada where aboriginal children would grow up in secure families and in healthy communities with the opportunity to take their full place in Canada.

As a result, we also said that the resolution of land claims would be a priority. This is our vision and we have been moving step by step to bring it alive. In two years we have already made considerable progress.

On August 10 the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the federal interlocutor for Metis and non-status Indians announced the government's approach to the implementation of the inherent right of aboriginal self-government. We have fostered greater economic development opportunities for aboriginal communities through co-management agreements and support for business ventures. We have committed an additional \$20 million annually to the Indian and Inuit post-secondary student support program. We have settled some 44