

Supply

• (1855)

The funding is not the problem, it is the management of the funding. We have created through alternative funding arrangements the flexibility for First Nations and tribal councils to adjust their priorities within budgets. If we reach the day where we see a transfer of global funding to an Indian government agency, then aboriginal leadership will have the delightful challenge of making decisions that would include cuts or rearranging priorities, which is the way it should be with self-government.

We want aboriginal people to control their own funding. That is why over 75 per cent of my department's budget is presently administered by First Nations people.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiag): Mr. Speaker, when the minister spoke it was interesting to note that he made it sound as if whatever problems prevail today is the fault of the previous Liberal governments.

We have to understand that this government has been the Government of Canada for the last nine years. Its members keep blaming the previous Liberal governments for everything that goes wrong. They talk about how well they have treated the aboriginal people. They are now proposing, under the Department of National Revenue, to tax status Indians off reserve, which they previously never did. I do not call that treating the aboriginal people in the best of ways, when they are proposing to tax them when they had not previously taxed them. They are proposing to cut the economic development programs of the aboriginal people by 28 per cent. They have done an across the board 10 per cent cut to aboriginal organizations funded by the Secretary of State.

All these things have been cut. They cut the housing funds, even though there is a severe housing shortage in the Northwest Territories. If the government does not reverse the decisions it has made on these issues, as far as we are concerned all this will be likened to a full-grown male caribou's droppings.

Mr. Siddon: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member thought I was accusing previous Liberal governments. I do not think I even used the term.

I was saying that a system of many decades duration which is based on the Parliament and the Indian affairs minister deciding what is best for aboriginal people, where we spend money to solve every problem, that that

system has failed. I said we are trying to turn in a new direction and establish a new relationship where we can make adequate funds available within the usual budgetary limits, but the difficult decisions and choices in future will increasingly be made by First Nations leadership. That is what I was saying.

I want to make it quite clear that the government has over \$350 million available for economic development under the Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy, and there is no 28 per cent cut in that amount. In fact, the government has increased significantly the funding for economic development. The results show that since 1984 we have seen the creation of several thousand new aboriginal businesses.

I should also point out that this year the funding for aboriginal education at all levels will be almost \$1 billion. There are significant increases under this government which never occurred under previous governments in all of the history of Canada.

What I am trying to say to the House today is that all the money in the world will not solve these problems if the system is wrong. It is the system that this Parliament has to change.

• (1900)

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am very delighted that the minister is here today to participate in this debate, given the serious nature of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Would the hon. member like to ask the minister a question?

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your flexibility and leeway in this regard.

The minister is defending the position of the government on economic development but there is no doubt when one reads the estimates that the economic development funds have been reduced by 31 per cent.

The aboriginal people in Saskatchewan, in particular, and across Canada say that the funds that are available for economic development are reduced from what they were expecting this year. They are suggesting there are unhonoured commitments that have been made which will go unfulfilled.

My question to the minister is—and I thank you for the opportunity to ask it, Mr. Speaker—are we not sending a poor message when the estimates show an