

The Constitution

That is most important because even, if we have bills of any constitutional resolution entrenching those rights, it is essential that such rights be defined, considered and upheld by the native people themselves with the same degree of learning as those around them.

When we look at the negotiations carried on with the Indians, either the Montagnais, Naskapis or Dénés we cannot but see their cohort of white lawyers. And often when we have discussions directly with the first inhabitants of this country, we realize that finally their demands are quite simple but everything is tremendously complicated in the legal system with which we deal. I am not sure that those lawyers, either men or women, seek any speedy settlement of the native problem. I think that we should make sure that our young and older native people are trained to discuss directly with the white people, to actually deal on a personal basis by mutual agreement without having any inferiority complex, Mr. Speaker. This has often characterized our discussions with the native people. We had a superiority complex as white people and we were always dealing from a superior point of view with them so that our relations were thwarted from the beginning. Now if we want to maintain those relations, we will have to be at the same status level and have the same degree of learning. And this calls for information and training, Mr. Speaker.

There is a fourth aspect I would like to deal with, even though time is moving fast, and this is local geography. When travelling through the Manicouagan riding and across Canada with the Transport Committee and different other committees, I have always noted how much the native people have been able to shape this country with their culture, their traditions, their own characteristics. It is very important for the sake of the discussions that will take place and with the motion introduced by the Minister of Justice (Mr. MacGuigan), that native people be allowed a lot of room in this country. I am not certain that the current reserve system is the best formula. The native people themselves should be asked what they want in that respect, because reserves were established with the thought that they might be good to keep native people in one place. But the white man's traditions and ways of life were forced down their throats, and this has imposed upon them a culture that is not theirs.

Sure enough the native people who live in Caughnawaga or who can live in the Huron Village or in other places in Vancouver or in Alberta, those who have become city dwellers, may have adopted our style of living. But if we are to preserve the rights and the characteristics of the native people, if they really insist on protecting their traditions, their heritage and their sociology, we will have to ensure that the Canadian territory is available to all native people. This is very important. This does not mean that either they or we have to forego the rights or lifestyle that we share in common. It is simply a matter of having complementary ways of life. I am thinking here of the various rivers where they go fishing for salmon and other species, the hunting of various species of game. In my view, Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute anomaly that in this

country we should have very restricted territories with an unbelievable number of licenses that a native must carry if he wants to do hunting, fishing or trapping for his livelihood. What the native people are asking us, and I remember two years ago the Montagnais from La Romaine were caught 300 miles north of La Romaine, in Labrador, and we had to send Canadian Forces' helicopters to get them out because of abnormal winter conditions, that is too little snow and bad seasonal temperature causing the game to get rather scarce, and indeed the Indians went short of food and they had to be flown down fast. Those Indian people are forced to comply with all kinds of regulations, to get all sorts of licenses to live as their ancestors did, and it is my view that within the constitutional talks that will start we should be very, very cautious to ensure that the native people have the freedom to lead lives of fulfillment as far as hunting, tradition, medical care and their crafts are concerned, and this is extremely important, Mr. Speaker.

I will conclude on this because my time is up, but I would simply commend once again the Government, the native people and the provinces who have now succeeded in agreeing to initiate complete discussions on the constitutional level, respecting the rights of native men and women. I commend the nine provinces who have already taken part in this initiative, but I hope that Quebec will follow suit and very soon. And I hope that these talks will lead to a better life for all native people which will serve the best interests of Canada as a whole, Mr. Speaker.

• (1740)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. The Chair should now see a Member to its left. However, I should inform the House that the Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger) has already spoken in the debate. He may contribute additionally with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): I appreciate the House giving me a few minutes, and I will take only a few minutes, Mr. Speaker. In my remarks I want to bring a few of the observations from the standing committee which received this resolution on Monday. We worked with it on Monday evening and through Tuesday. I think it is important, not only for this House but for the Senate, to recognize that the aboriginal groups want this resolution passed as quickly as possible.

I appreciated the remarks made by the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald), the remarks made by the Hon. Member for Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands (Mr. Manly) and the remarks made by the Hon. Member for Manicouagan (Mr. Maltais) on this Bill. I know