

*Indian Act*

that a consultation process had occurred. It was necessary to specify, to arrange in advance, and to agree mutually that a certain discussion would be seen as a consultation. There will be the requirement for intensive discussion at the committee level, intensive examination of the ramifications and effects of this Bill. There will be the need for native representation on the committee to ensure that the final legislative product is something that will be fair to the Indian people of Canada.

As I sat in the House today listening to the Hon. Minister, I was more than pleased to see that among his audience was the nation's most famous expectant father. Then I thought of the prospects that his child might face compared to the prospects of an Indian child born at the same time. I do that in no way to single out the Prime Minister's (Mr. Mulroney) children. Were my wife expecting, I would use the example of my own child.

First, there is the difference in life expectancy, estimated now at a decade or more, between the two children. Second, there is access to the services which are required to raise and bring up a healthy infant. Third, there is the education, for one in his or her native tongue, for the other in a foreign tongue. Fourth, there is access to the services that you and I take for granted, Mr. Speaker. I am thinking of clean running water, sanitary sewage disposal, paved roads, a light switch that produces electricity when it is turned from the off to the on position, and, finally, housing of acceptable standards.

For many Indian children today, those amenities and those opportunities are not a reality. For many, none of those services are accessible.

The Bill which we consider today will accomplish much that is good, but much will remain to be done for the Indian people of this country. Some discrimination will be removed, and I hope that at the end of the legislative process we will be able to take pride in what we have done. Many problems will remain and some will be created as people seek to be repatriated to reserves where the land or financial resource base is really not adequate to support them. I am hopeful that the interest that is generated on this crucial matter of membership, the matter of necessary reforms to the Indian Act, will eventually impel us to reform not only that Act in its entirety but also to reform and to bring the condition of Canada's Indian people to a state of which we can all be proud.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Robichaud:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Would it be in order to ask a question of the former speaker, the Hon. Member for Nunatsiqa (Mr. Suluk)?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** We need unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Robichaud:** I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank Hon. Members for their courtesy. In listening to the Hon. Member for Nunatsiqa I heard him say, in the question of the division of the Northwest Territories, that the native people had some

concerns. I would like to hear his comments on this question of division.

**Mr. Suluk:** Mr. Speaker, in relation to the native people, specifically the Inuit who would reside in the eastern half of the proposed new territory in the Northwest Territories, the Inuit were concerned that many reporters and many of the non-Inuit were concerned that many reporters and many of the non-Inuit in the western part keep making references to ethnicity, in particular that the Inuit would like to form an ethnic government even though it is a public government. These kinds of things tend to create some misconceptions about what is happening in the Territories.

Perhaps I will take this opportunity to add that there is a feeling of rejection by the East in the western part of the Territory. Perhaps it could be solved by suggesting that since the residents of the Yukon Territory and the residents of the would-be leftover territory in the west are predominantly of the same culture, that is Indian and others, they should join together and create the eleventh province.

**Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources):** Mr. Speaker, I have been here today throughout the debate and must say that I have enjoyed it immensely. One of the great privileges I have had as a parliamentarian was to be spokesman for the Progressive Conservative Party when we were in opposition in the portfolio of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In the past year leading up to the election, I have spent a considerable amount of time with the Indian people of our country, many of whom I am proud to say are friends.

I enjoyed my work with the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner), the Chairman of the standing committee, and with the Hon. Member for Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands (Mr. Manly). Although I do not serve on that committee now, but wish I did, there was a feeling on that committee, I believe there still is, to work together in as non-partisan a manner as was possible. There were times when partisan politics did come into play, but we tried not to allow that to happen. We in the committee last spring were faced with Bill C-47, amendments to the Indian Act. It was probably one of the most hectic six days that I have spent. I think that the Chairman and the Hon. Member for Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands will agree that it was quite an experience.

● (1530)

I do not want this to be interpreted as being critical of the former Government, because my remarks are not intended to be that, but we were not given a sufficient amount of time to listen to the representations, to absorb the representations or to amend the Act in the way we would have liked. There were some last minute amendments brought in and some great negotiations going on with the Minister. As we all know, the House was going down for the summer. If I can put in an aside, it was going down, period. It was going down for the summer and so we were rushed. If my memory serves me