

Adjournment Debate

on that side who could tell us what bill we will be debating tomorrow. If there is someone who would be so kind as to let us know, it would be appreciated.

Mr. Harquail: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is the government's intention to continue with the debate on the finance bill, Bill C-56.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS—FUNDING OF NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS FOR LAND CLAIMS NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I directed a question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Faulkner) concerning funding for the Dene nation and Metis Association in the Northwest Territories. I understand the association has not yet received funding for what I believe is referred to as the first quarter of this fiscal year. The association is in the sad circumstance now that it will have to layoff staff soon if funding is not forthcoming. This would not do much good for those people the association represents. The association will have to let go trained staff who have learned to work in the area of research, and so on, into land claims for the native people of the Northwest Territories, a rather specialized field. There are not many people who work in that area, and should the Metis Association be forced to lay their trained staff off and funding is resumed further down the road, the association will then have to find other staff. It is very likely that those people now working for the association will take other jobs because they have to pay the rent, feed their children and put bread and butter on the table like anyone else.

● (2202)

The minister made mention of a moratorium. I understand that he has communicated with the Dene nation and the Metis Association on this matter. Unfortunately, that will not be of much benefit to the people of the Northwest Territories at this time. However, the situation may come up further down the road and perhaps at that time I may be in a position to support the minister should that happen. I certainly hope that it will not.

I raised this question about funding because the organizations are very concerned about it. I would like the minister or his parliamentary secretary to elaborate a bit more on the reply which I received yesterday in this House, at which time the minister mentioned again the idea of moratorium. Perhaps the minister or his parliamentary secretary could let me know

[Mr. Paposki.]

what the intentions are regarding the funding of these organizations. It is my sincere hope and belief that the two organizations will soon be co-operating and working together toward a fair and just settlement claim for the native people along the Mackenzie Valley, but they certainly will not be able to do this without funds.

I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that it is indeed a very serious matter, and I wish to hear what the parliamentary secretary has to say on this.

Mr. Ross Milne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the concern raised by the hon. member for the Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth) and to elaborate on the comments made by the minister in this House yesterday, Wednesday, May 31, in question period respecting the funding of native organizations in the territories.

I would like first to recap briefly that two of the native organizations in the Northwest Territories, the Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement and the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, have received loans totalling \$903,395 and \$3,239,607 respectively to the end of the fiscal year 1977-78. In the current fiscal year, funding will be going forward to both COPE and ITC in the amount of approximately \$1 million to each organization. Although funding has not yet been advanced this fiscal year for the two native organizations in the Mackenzie Valley, the Dene nation or Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, and the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories, the fact of the matter is that no decision has been made to impose a moratorium to date.

All members should be aware, as is the hon. member who put the question, that the government has funded both these organizations, in the past for claims research, proposals formulation and negotiations, to a total of \$2,509,489; \$1,405,000 of this has gone to the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories since 1975-76, with the remaining \$1,104,489 to the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories since 1976-77.

I would like to elaborate on why the government has accepted separate claims from the two organizations, yet has taken the position that there must be only one settlement for all native people in the Mackenzie Valley. Prior to pronouncement of the Dene declaration in 1975, all native people in the Mackenzie Valley were united behind a common cause. When the Métis Association in 1976 announced its non-acceptance of the Dene declaration as a basis for a claim proposal, the government considered it important that the aspirations of the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories membership be known before negotiations began. Consequently, the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories was funded separately to research and develop its own claim.

● (2207)

The government's position has been constant since submission of the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories claim in September 1977, now that both claims are in, that a