

Furthermore, I am convinced that the best way to achieve the objectives I outlined earlier is through settlement of comprehensive native claims. That is the way to secure their traditional economic base: that is the way northern native people will become equipped to make the choice between their traditions and the mainstream of Canadian society. Land claims agreements are the best method available for them to strike their own balance between these alternatives. I can assure this House that the priorities in this matter will not be neglected by this government.

Hon. members opposite may find that amusing. I must express my concern at this point that the matter of land claims is not a subject that has ever been addressed by the party opposite. I think it would be interesting for us to know what their position would be in terms of a comprehensive land claim settlement.

We are attempting to resolve land claims wherever there is a demonstrated willingness on the part of native people to negotiate. Mr. Speaker, it takes courage to make these kinds of choices and I want to tell you about some people who have that kind of fortitude. Only a few weeks ago, an agreement in principle was signed in Sachs Harbour with the committee for original peoples' entitlement covering the Inuit of the western Arctic. That agreement, which forms the basis for a final settlement, protects the traditional economic base of the Inuvialuit. Other measures are designed to encourage the Inuvialuit to diversify their traditional economy and to participate on their own terms with development interests.

It has not been easy for the Inuit of the western Arctic, and particularly their leaders on whose shoulders rests the responsibility for generations to come. Changes of this magnitude and the options they present are profound: but the Inuvialuit have recognized the necessity to make those choices now and have had the moral conviction to follow through.

With their inspiration to guide us, I am confident that there are ways to achieve the balanced economic opportunity necessary to protect native and non-native interests. The consequences of imbalance are awesome, but there is reason for us to be optimistic. The kind of co-operation that has been demonstrated since the Hay River conference, the complementary measures in this budget and the example of the Inuvialuit lead me to believe that the solutions are at hand—they rest with the goodwill and resourcefulness of dedicated people, and I have enough faith to believe it can be done.

● (1612)

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, would the minister permit a question?

Mr. Faulkner: Yes.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell us at what stage in the amending and consideration process of the cabinet are the amendments to the Northwest Territories Act requested by the legislature of the Northwest Territories in a letter written by their speaker, Mr. David Searle, to the Commissioner, Mr. Drury?

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Mr. Faulkner: Mr. Speaker, yes, I am pleased to respond to that question. The amendments are now through cabinet. They are out of the Department of Justice. They are about to go to the legislation and House Planning Committee and I would expect, with the co-operation of all parties of this house, that we would have this bill in this House before Christmas.

May I just take advantage of the opportunity afforded to me by the question, to express appreciation to the hon. member and his party for their support in giving us all three readings, it is understood, with one speech per party. I understand that we may have the same agreement with the other parties, but discussions are still going on. If we have that, I think we could get the bill through the House quickly.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to assure the minister that there have been appropriate discussions. On behalf of the Progressive Conservative party, I can say to him that we are prepared to do that.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. May I just say the matter is under consideration.

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Burnaby-Richmond-Delta): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to appear before this House to offer some observations on the budget which was introduced last Thursday by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien), to speak both as a candidate in the recent by-elections and as a representative of the people in Burnaby-Richmond-Delta.

I am not usually known to express gratitude in a profuse fashion. However, I would like to begin by complimenting the Minister of Finance for some of the economic initiatives undertaken by this budget. Many of them look surprisingly familiar to me. Having been a candidate for some months and having studied the policy documents of my party, I found a remarkable similarity in some of the short-term initiatives which the Minister of Finance announced in his budget.

I would like to back away from the question of specific initiatives announced in the budget and talk for a few moments about the question of budgeting from a more general point of view. In my mind—and the minds of many constituents from western Canada—the trend of the current government is to lead this country into an unprecedented economic crisis. This has been ably described by my colleague, the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens). We have a situation in 1978 where government spending, which is at a level of \$50 billion, is arcing up in an ever increasing curve because of the complications of high interest rates, devaluation of the Canadian dollar relative to its American counterpart, indexing of expenditures in the forms of salaries and other costs to government, and, in general, inflation.

Similarly, we have a situation where revenues of government—\$35 billion for the fiscal year—are not growing nearly as rapidly. They are in fact arcing on a downward curve. That results from the tremendous increase of disincentive in our society. The consequence has been higher and higher rates of