

Routine Proceedings

• (1240)

[English]

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question. I think he misinterpreted what I suggested in terms of asking the aboriginal leaders of this country, which would include Quebec, to have one of their number address the joint Houses of Parliament. I think it would be an appropriate way of beginning a year in which this Parliament commits itself to deal with the issues, as I pointed out, that remain unfinished between Canada and its aboriginal people.

I mentioned someone of the stature of Georges Erasmus, Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. No, I did not specifically ask that he be invited.

Certainly there are disagreements on issues among provinces, municipalities, political parties, and various groups. It is understandable that there would be differences among aboriginal groups as well.

I think it would be appropriate for this Parliament to call on the aboriginal leadership of this country to select one of their numbers, a chief or an elder, to come and address this Parliament on the hopes and the aspirations of the aboriginal people of this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Madam Speaker, I would like to know—I skimmed through the report this morning and it contains a number of statistics—whether the committee also analyses figures on housing, income and percentage of the prison population, on a province-by-province basis.

Do we have statistics by province that tell us something about housing and income and about the prison population as a percentage of the provincial figure?

I would like to know whether the committee has those statistics and if it does, could they be tabled?

[English]

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Madam Speaker, what the committee was doing in its report and in the research it carried out up until March 29, 1990 which resulted in its report was trying to give Canadians a broad picture of the quality of life enjoyed by native people in Canada as compared with the quality of life enjoyed by other

Canadians and to show that there were disparities which have to be corrected.

I know the information the hon. gentleman mentioned is available with respect to aboriginal inmates in prison on a province-by-province basis. There is a Canadian Bar Association report. There is the report of Max Yalden, Canadian Human Rights Commissioner. That information is widely available. I know there is a lower number of aboriginal people in the population of Quebec than in other provinces. However, the number of aboriginal inmates is far too high in all provinces, and that is why we have this report. It is one of the issues this report calls on Parliament to deal with.

[Translation]

Mr. Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): I would like to point out, Madam Speaker, that first of all, since 1986 the Department of Indian Affairs has had information on these matters, by province, and I am somewhat surprised that they are not given here. Is it perhaps because they put Quebec in a favourable light? I am not sure.

I would also like to know why no Indians from Quebec were asked to testify before the committee unless some were invited but did not show up. In any case, no Indians from Quebec testified before the committee. Is there any explanation for this?

[English]

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Madam Speaker, I thank the questioner again. The committee makes it a practice to invite all aboriginal organizations. In this one we attempted to invite the national organizations, but others were notified and did volunteer. Included in those national organizations were organizations which do represent native people in Quebec. We felt that we had a relatively broad representation from every province in Canada and from all of the territories.

In addition, the statistics are basically national statistics because we are the national Parliament dealing with national issues. I am sure there was no intention on the part of the committee to eliminate statistics that would have been favourable to one province or another. If it has happened, it was not the committee's intention to do that.

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to discuss the committee report *Unfinished Business*. Certainly the committee put a