

*Government Orders*

compared with the quality of life of aboriginal peoples elsewhere.

I think we agreed on that. We also agreed that Quebec was certainly not going to build the Berlin wall the day after sovereignty is proclaimed to prevent aboriginal peoples or the Inuit from maintaining their contacts with their brothers and sisters in Canada and elsewhere, including Antarctica and the United States. Those contacts already exist and will continue to do so.

So, therefore, we each assured the other. They asked me as well, naturally, for support. They were very concerned about the British Columbia Treaty Commission. They said: "You know, Mr. Bachand, the commission will never get off the ground so long as there is no progress in the negotiations with the Nisga'a". If these negotiations blocked at the point they had reached, the others' negotiations at the first stage could almost certainly not be expected to catch up with the Nisga'a. The Nisga'a are 20 years ahead of the other communities in their negotiations. Therefore the bill before us today is of major concern in British Columbia.

I want to say in passing—I was talking about the Carrier-Sekani earlier—I would like, while we are before the cameras here, to salute Camille Joseph, elder of the Carrier-Sekani nation, who is well into his 90s. I simply sent him a congratulatory note, but I will take a moment during my speech to note it in passing, because I think it should be mentioned.

The three communities I have just talked to you about are on the mainland. I went to the island as well. The same concerns are to be found on Vancouver Island. Members of the Mid-Island Tribal Council expressed their concerns to me about the progress in the Nisga'a negotiations and the systematic blocking they are currently facing.

I thought it important to situate the context of this bill's passage, a bit. There is nothing like speaking when one has been there personally and has met them and discussed all these questions with them, often over a number of hours. So I think it appropriate to mention it here. British Columbia is very rich in native culture.

• (1645)

You know, as everywhere else, there are 200 reserves, 200 communities there and whether the people are Chilcotin, Nisga'a, Haida or others, all these nations are different and even communities within the same nation differ from one another.

Therefore, it is important to know. I went to the museum in Victoria, and the whole place, the complete two story museum, is dedicated to relations between the white people and the aboriginal peoples. There we can see that the aboriginal peoples

of British Columbia really had an impact on cultural values in that province.

I will not hide the fact that there is some hostility now. It is true, but maybe it is because some people provoke that hostility. I can tell you that the natives feel no hostility whatsoever towards the white people. But they have been waiting for 150 years for issues to be settled, and it has not happened yet.

It is important to realize, to see, and it is important that I can attest to the cultural impact of the native people and to their contribution to the life of the white people in British Columbia. You can see it in all the stores, the museums and the schools. The native culture is omnipresent, it has a direct impact on white and non aboriginal values and I think that, with the creation of this commission, time has come to make sure we reach an amicable agreement with the native people of that area, just as we are trying to do in Quebec where I think we are well on our way.

According to my notes, Europeans have been present in British Columbia for 140 years now, and during that time, 14 treaties covering approximately 358 square miles on Vancouver Island were signed, involving the Hudson's Bay Company. Since Confederation, there has been only one treaty, in 1899; it is one of the numbered ones. In total, there are ten numbered treaties in Canada and that one is number eight; it covers the Peace River region and the northern part of Alberta.

It is important to note that treaty negotiations have been essential for native peoples in British Columbia for the last 140 years. Their chiefs went to London to see the king. They regularly came to Ottawa, and went to the Court in London, to try to solve their problem, but to no avail. Worse yet, we, the non-natives, made serious mistakes concerning them, and British Columbia is no exception.

Moreover, I have here some notes indicating that in 1927 and 1951 they were prohibited from going to court. That meant that these people, who were trying to negotiate their land claims in good faith, could not even go to court when the negotiations appeared to be deadlocked. In spite of it all, native peoples have persevered, sometimes breaking the law, and today the situation is such that we have to find a solution. Of course, now they are allowed to go to court and, in British Columbia, things are following their course.

I have a few examples here. In 1973, the six judges of the Supreme Court were split on whether to recognize native land titles; consequently, the federal government said: "Listen, we have to settle this whole thing. We have to start negotiating".

In 1982, there was another turning point with the patriation of the constitution which, by the way, Quebec did not sign, and never will after all, I believe. This constitution contained provisions dealing with native peoples; aboriginal rights and treaty rights were recognized; the last remnants of British