

*The Constitution*

Justice on amending the Constitution in favour of our native people at an early opportunity.

Another point that I should like to make, Mr. Speaker, is the importance of updating quickly the rights of the native people. I say this because in my own area, Manicouagan, which borders on both Labrador and Quebec, for strictly provincial reasons, the right to hunt, fish and trap of Quebec Indians on Labrador territory has been restricted if not withdrawn completely, and I had to contact the Newfoundland Premier several times to ensure that Quebec Indians have the same rights in Newfoundland-owned Labrador. When a caribou wanders about Labrador or Quebec, it is still the same caribou, but we, the white men, have passed laws which allow the Indians to hunt this caribou in Quebec, but not on Newfoundland territory, and the same applies in various provinces. Where the Inuit live, there are a number of conflicting laws which prevent the Inuit and other native people from following their traditional way of life. This situation is due to conflicting statutes and regulations which restrict the daily activities of the native people.

When I say that the provinces, the Indians and the Inuit have to sit down with the Federal Government in the near future, it is because the native people must be allowed to live as they have always done. We often forget to mention the significant contribution of these people to Canada. To acknowledge that fact, Mr. Speaker, you really have to live in areas where there are native people. When reference is made to native people in this House, the city dwellers often come to mind, but most of them live in northern Quebec and Canada and in frontier areas. They are the first guardians of the country. They are the ones who allowed French, British and Canadian explorers to travel across our country safely, because they know it like the back of their hands. These exceptional guides have enabled our oil and gold mining companies to make important discoveries for the economy of Canada, but this fact is rarely mentioned.

● (1730)

However, the amount of tax dollars spent by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is often mentioned. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that all the native people will claim at future constitutional meetings is the right to self-government and to economic self-sufficiency so that they will no longer be dependent on the central government. Mr. Speaker, native people are asking for equal rights, of course, but they also want an opportunity to develop within this country without losing their identity. We should keep in mind that equal rights and equal legal entity does not in any way wipe out the identity of an ethnic group. Native people do not claim to be better than Canadians generally, they are not concerned about being treated as inferior human beings as they have been in the past, but they certainly want to be part of the day-to-day economic activities and thus give their younger generations a chance to

prosper with the country without forever depending on Government laws and regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the best way to sum up the initiative taken last Monday by the Minister of Justice would be to say that we are aiming at the eventual disappearance of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development so that, once and for all, native people will be full-fledged citizens like the rest of us with their own brand of Government to take matters in their own hands. Essentially, that is the take over which the Minister of Justice was advocating last Monday when he introduced amendments to the Canadian Constitution. I think that is wonderful.

In certain regions already, and I have in mind my friend Charlie Makiuk of Fort Chimo, or Joseph Guanish of the Schefferville area, the Naskapi chief, those people are pressing ever harder to be free on their own territories and to develop them as they see fit, with due respect for the rights of white people and other Canadians. They want to spur their economic activity and give a chance to their future generations to go on living as free and prosperous men and women. That is what the native people are asking for and that is indeed what the Minister of Justice paves the way for by introducing amendments to our constitutional resolution of 1982.

That was the second point, Mr. Speaker, namely to make sure that we will have more constitutional conferences to bring current laws and regulations up to date to give native people an opportunity to develop and manage their own affairs.

My third point, Mr. Speaker, has to do with information. Native people need to have more information and more training if they are to be looking after themselves. In that respect, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is to be commended for what it has accomplished over the past twenty years or so, but a lot of ground remains to be covered when it comes to information and training.

Anyone attending the various House committee sittings where Indian affairs are dealt with can see for himself that an increasing number of native people have become experts in many fields and that they are now quite capable of assuming administrative, social and civil responsibilities on behalf of their own people. We have seen it again in the Fort Chimo area since the signing of the James Bay Agreement. The Makivik corporation which has replaced the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is now managing the assets granted under the James Bay Agreement.

In the Ungava Bay area, Air Inuit is now operated by the Inuit themselves. It is now necessary, Mr. Speaker, during the various constitutional conferences that we make sure that training and information are not only available but that means are taken to enable the young people, because there is not such a large native community and it is essential that a greater number of young people attend our schools, colleges and universities in order that these leaders may be in a position to engage in discussions on the same footing as their countrymen.