

Government Orders

It is for these reasons that I have grave concerns with respect to the work of the B.C. Treaty Commission. I am convinced that the province of British Columbia should not be at the table other than as an observer. If we continue down the road we are going, I am certain it will only create further problems in our society. The net result will be that those people who we would most like to help will be the people who will be most hurt.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the comments about my riding demonstrated the need for some lessons on the history of aboriginal people in Canada.

My riding, Nunatsiak, spans over three time zones from Tuktoyaktuk in the west to Pangnirtung in the east, from Arviat in the south to the home of Santa Claus in the north. However the fact remains that the native Indian population of Nunatsiak is probably less than .05 per cent. The area I represent is Inuit. It is 85 per cent Inuit.

The ignorance of people like the hon. member opposite is why aboriginal people in Canada must be recognized. At the beginning of his comments the hon. member quite clearly said that this could not be native land because the courts said so. He may very well believe what the courts have said, but whose courts? Whose justice system determined that this was crown land? We did not set up the present justice system. By the way, we were not asked whether it was the kind of justice system we wanted or whether it was the kind of government we wanted. We were not asked any of those questions by the Government of Canada when the provincial and territorial governments were set up.

There has to be an understanding. We have a bit of a problem with all the things that have happened. I do not want to revisit all of it. However I want to point out to the member and to all other Canadians that a great injustice has been done in the past and we are trying to correct the situation. If we take a little more time as the government than members opposite would like to see, I say we can afford to do it because it has taken 124 years to arrive at this stage.

We have to ensure that expeditious approval of negotiated claims is achieved. I am sure members opposite will ensure that we have their support when the bill comes to committee. I hope the member ensures that he understands the issues, whether it is the justice system or righting the wrongs that have been done over the years, before thinking that every aboriginal person who comes to him is representative of aboriginal peoples at large.

• (1255)

I take back my comment about all aboriginal people, but the majority of aboriginal people know that wrongs have been done to them and are trying to right those situations. I apologize for making the hon. member think that I was representing all

aboriginal people. I am a Canadian, I am an Inuk, and I do not represent all aboriginal people. However I have a problem telling the House that in a lot of cases I do not always agree with the president of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, but I have no problem saying that she is my leader for the benefit of the Inuit people at large. We as aboriginal people have leaders who may not necessarily be representative of all aboriginal peoples, but by and large they represent the majority.

Mr. Scott (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the parliamentary secretary's remarks. I was offended that he would refer to me as ignorant. He may disagree with me on a philosophical basis and that is fine; that is what Parliament is all about. However I can assure the House that I am not ignorant. I am not ignorant on this issue. I have spent a great deal of time on it.

I should like to respond to some of the remarks the member made in talking about representatives of native people. I have never had the opportunity to spend much time in the member's riding, but I have spent a great deal of time in British Columbia and I have met with many aboriginal people. I can assure the member that great numbers of aboriginal people have real concerns about their own leadership.

In my riding massive amounts of federal tax dollars are turned over to aboriginal leaders with no accountability whatsoever. Members of that community cannot even go to into the band office to get a breakdown of how the money is being spent. We see aboriginal leaders driving around in fancy new pickup trucks and fancy new cars while the people in their communities are getting by on virtually nothing. That is the kind of situation we are faced with in British Columbia.

I find it very difficult to listen to the member talk about representatives of aboriginal people. There are any deeply concerned people in my constituency who write to the ministers involved: the Minister of Health, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

In the case of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans they write to tell him they have a problem supporting the AFS. There is no accountability for how that money is being distributed. They just see a bunch of rangers going around their communities with fancy new pickups and new jet boats. There is no accounting of how the money is being spent.

The Minister of Health is signing health agreements with aboriginal hereditary groups, not elected representatives, in my riding. The people who live in those communities come to me with serious concerns about the future of health care for them under that kind of system. The native leadership in those instances is always talking about how it is working for the good of its people and how it is trying to further the interests of its people.