

*Private Members' Business*

are deficient from standards set by the environmental assessment panel.

The Innu people in Labrador have agreed to enter preliminary discussions about land claims which were long delayed by the government. They were put way down the list for land claims while the destruction of their land continues. They are willing to enter preliminary discussions with the governments of Canada and Newfoundland. They hope that maybe in a year and a half they will be able to define the scope of the negotiations for land claims and find out whether there will be some interim protection measures rather than chasing the people out of the land while we have a long-winded debate about whose land it is and what claims those people have there.

It is like the principle of being innocent until you are proved guilty. You should not be driven out of your land while it is being decided whether that is your land when you have been living there for 9,000 years.

The government claims it is uninhabited. What it means is that these people do not have a piece of paper saying: "This is a title deed and I own this land", but they have occupied that land for 9,000 years.

In Quebec the land claim discussions are going ahead under *Le Conseil attikamek-montagnais* that represents the Innu people there under that name.

As I said these noise levels from the flights have been identified as being very harmful primarily to the people but also to the caribou which is a major source of food in the half-year when they live on that land, to migratory waterfowl and birds of prey, also sources of food, and partly because the exhaust of the airplanes and the fuel that they sometimes dump into the rivers or lakes contaminate the waterways and contaminate the moss that the caribou eat.

The Department of National Defence has claimed that they have an avoidance strategy of staying five kilometres away from any concentration of caribou or waterfowl. What the Innu claim is that in too many of the sensitive areas it is not possible because the Innu and the caribou or the waterfowl that they hunt tend to use the waterways, the rivers and lakes, and that is what the low-level flights use. They follow the valleys. That is the whole point: flying low in the valley to keep underneath and out of detection of the radar.

They both want the same areas and it has not been possible in fact for the low-level flights to avoid them. In spite of the stated policy the low-level flights, for example, continue at Shipiskan Lake and at Wuchusk Lake. The DND finds out where they are because when they fly in there in the spring the bush pilots know where they deposited them. The DND have them registered there in their published memos known as Goose Bay Operation Directives. These two lakes, Shipiskan and Wuchusk, were both listed on the operations directive for May 31, 1991, but they still receive frequent overflights. It has been going on all summer. DND is not serious in claiming that it tries to avoid these people. It just does not avoid them. It knows they are there and still overflies them.

The Innu have done everything they can to make their point. They have spoken to the government for years. They pointed out that they were never conquered, never ceded their land. All they want is to be allowed to live in peace, which they did before we came.

They have complained to Ottawa. They have been put off with discussions of land claims some time in the future, while the flights go on. They have won support from a good deal of the public and the churches in Canada, but also in the United States, in Britain, in The Netherlands and in Germany because these people know what the low-level flights are like. They demanded that the low-level flights be eliminated or at least greatly reduced in those countries, and so they understand what the people in Labrador and eastern Quebec are suffering.

What is at stake here is not only the appeal of the present generation, but a deeper principle. These people have respected the ancient tradition of maintenance of the land for themselves, their neighbours and future generations. Right now they have been willing to defend the land.

When I visited there two years ago one lady told me that on her grandfather's deathbed he said: "If the white people come, don't bother them; but if they hurt the land, defend it". She did, with others, defend it non-violently. She and others walked on to the airstrip and dared the planes to land while about a hundred or so of them were sitting there. Families went, mothers, fathers,