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● (1405)

The other problem is the difference in stumpage fees in the various wood-producing provinces. I suggest the Government continue talks in earnest with the provinces to set a common stumpage fee so that all the companies from all provinces are playing on a level playing field.

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ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, the aboriginal rights conference taking place today and tomorrow is an important period in Canadian history. Our aboriginal peoples are seeking their basic right, the unrestricted right of self-government. On Friday in this House, in the form of an amendment, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) stated the Liberal position by asking the Government to fulfil its constitutional obligations to protect and guarantee the aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal people of Canada, the inherent right to self-government, and that it be recognized in the Constitution.

Erica-Irene Daes, a human rights official from the United Nations, said earlier this week:

That the United Nations and the international community is watching very closely . . . I will underline that the Canadian Government has ratified the international agreements on human rights and is legally bound to honour them.

The aboriginal people have been in Canada before the white man ever appeared but they are forced to fight for their basic human right to handle their own affairs. The Canadian people have given their support to the aboriginal people, and I now urge the Government to stop its ambivalent approach and take a stand to provide our fellow Canadians the right to determine their way of life, to make decisions, manage, control and direct their own affairs.

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[*Translation*]

LIBERAL PARTY

INVITATION TO MAYORS AND ELECTED MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES IN FEDERAL RIDING OF SAINT-JEAN

Mr. Gabriel Fontaine (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, I have here a copy of a letter dated February 23, 1987 and sent to various mayors and elected municipal officers in the federal riding of Saint-Jean. The letter is from the Liberal Party of Canada.

The letter is quite clear. It orders the elected officers of the riding of Saint-Jean to attend a benefit where the guests of

honour will be none other than the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau) and Senator Rizzuto. The letter says, and I quote:

The presence of elected municipal officers at political events organized by the Liberal Party of Canada has been exceptionally discreet since the general election in September 1984.

Bearing this in mind, your presence—

Mr. Speaker, this is a letter to our mayors.

—or absence will most certainly be noticed at our May 1 benefit supper.

Are the Liberal Party's finances in such a sorry state that the party feels it has to resort to blackmail to get people to attend its benefit events?

To prevent similar occurrences, I now ask the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides to make amends for this attack on the freedom of speech of elected municipal officers.

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[*English*]

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, for non-native Canadians the time has come for us to decide whether we see ourselves as conquerors or as co-inhabitants with the aboriginal peoples of this land. It is clear that at the time of the signing of treaties the idea of cohabitation was the legal framework for the relationship between native and non-native people. But the cultural and political context was far too often, and still is, one of non-native Canadians seeing themselves as essentially a superior culture that would eventually overrun and eliminate aboriginal peoples as distinct peoples, and the way our various Governments have acted has reflected this belief.

In recent years through seeing the shortcomings of our own way of life, and through new insight into native culture and spirituality, we have come to regret past attitudes. But regret is not enough. The fact is that continuing inaction in recognizing aboriginal rights and the inherent constitutional right to self-government makes us no different from those of our ancestors who used force to subdue the legitimate rights of native peoples. We have the luxury of being able to do this by simply letting things go on without resolution as the status quo is on our side. The law is our law. But morally we will be no better than those who used force in the first place. Unless, unless today the First Ministers decide to break with a shameful past, recognize the inherent right of aboriginal peoples to self-government, and commit themselves to meaningful negotiations on how this long-overdue justice can take shape in a new and an exciting Canada where conquerors are no more.