

the goal of this exercise, nor is it the Canadian way of life, but it may well be the result. Once this central issue of equality is resolved, only then can we address the agenda of self-government and let the Minister's agenda—not that of the Deputy Minister—begin to prevail.

This weekend we celebrate Mother's Day. Let this be the kind of Mother's Day we can all share and rejoice in, one of family togetherness for all generations. Let us set an example of the fullest expression of human rights for all who share this wonderful land. Let us be people of our word. Let us remove discrimination, not just displace it.

Mr. Manly: Mr. Speaker, I was interested in listening to the remarks of the Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone). She mentioned that she had been very interested in the fascinating process of the First Ministers' Conference. When she was there she had an opportunity to see how the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) operated and she also saw how some of the provinces operated. She saw the reaction of some of the provinces, particularly the western provinces, to the whole question of aboriginal self-government. I think she got some impression of their over-all approach to aboriginal questions. In the light of that experience, would the Hon. Member care to comment on the proposal which was in the task force report and in the Cabinet memorandum that more responsibility for Indian Affairs should be turned over to the provinces? In light of what she saw of the provincial reaction at the First Ministers' Conference, how would she feel about that?

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, that question was one that I asked myself as I sat and watched an incredible exercise in labour negotiations. I particularly responded to the Saskatchewan proposal, which I believe the Hon. Member mentioned earlier, Alberta's reluctance, the very sensitive remarks of the New Brunswick Minister, and the obvious discomfort of many of those Prime Ministers who were placed in a situation of thinking of themselves first and of the aboriginal peoples second. They were thinking of the potential for loss of land, income, and all kinds of things. I do not really believe that the primary interest of the aboriginal peoples was the primary interest in the minds of all those Premiers. It may well have been that the wish of the federal Government was that that would happen, but with all of the manipulation and manoeuvring which was going on—and it was pretty obvious that plenty of the coffee breaks included some twisting of arms—it was easy to see the isolation of the Assembly of First Nations and the NCC groups as they differed, the Inuits as they suffered, and the Métis as they were trying to find their proper place. I would say that the provinces and the aboriginal peoples have not yet found their proper and comfortable home and, for the most part, these aboriginal people feel more comfortable and have a greater sense of trust in the federal Government, in which they feel the responsibility was vested in the first place.

Mr. Holtmann: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone). In her experience with the past administrations' handling of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development,

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does she feel that it was on the right track? Does she feel that it was taking the right attitude and approach to the problems which many native people have? I would like to have her comments on what has happened before. I want to know whether the Hon. Member felt that the previous administration, in its wisdom, was tackling this problem in the right manner.

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, the question is one of interest. First, I was not here then, so I cannot respond to what was done by the previous administration. I sat with the Hon. Member and watched and listened, as he did, to all these groups which appeared, and my impression, in total candour, was that something has to be done about the bureaucrats and the functionaries. I do not think any of the Ministers over the last 100 years have had a darn thing to say. What I think has happened is that we have lost ground to those who wheel and deal with the rights of deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and Indian agents, and it is the Indian agents who remove status and disenfranchise left, right and centre. The Hon. Member heard, as I did, the most incredible stories, and I don't even know if the Ministers knew about them.

So the Hon. Member should not try to dump on the past Liberal administration. I was not there so I cannot account for that. However, what has happened over the last 117 years? I think that for a few of those years the Hon. Member's Party was in office.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Questions or comments. The Hon. Member for Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Côté).

Mr. Côté (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, actually, I have a question I would like to ask the Hon. Member. Before she came here, before she was elected to this House, she must have kept herself informed about what was going on in our country. I was saying that even though you were not here in this House, you kept abreast of things. I suppose you were in Canada!

Mrs. Finestone: I was in Quebec.

Mr. Côté (Lac-Saint-Jean): So, you knew what was going on in this country, especially in Quebec. Has the situation deteriorated to that extent these last few months? We must come to grips with a problem that existed before and the Liberals were in office for at least fifty years. What did they do?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone).

Mrs. Finestone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy to answer this question. The day before yesterday, I had a meeting with native women of the province of Quebec who came here and were bitterly disappointed. They thought they would find friends among you but they are disappointed that you have... You tricked them. You approach the whole