

Government Orders

Mr. Lapierre: It isn't over yet!

Mr. Mulroney: No, it isn't over yet. The hon. member is right. However, they still deserve the respect and gratitude of Canadians for the truly outstanding way in which they carried out this difficult mission.

Lieutenant Colonel Robin Gagnon, Major Alain Tremblay, Private Patrick Cloutier—the young soldier who stood his ground coolly in a face to face challenge—and all the other personnel of 5 Brigade showed great courage and almost superhuman self-control in the face of extraordinary provocation.

There are no plans to attack the centre. No one is being interned there—least of all the innocent children who should be in school. They are welcome to leave at any time.

[*English*]

The armed people, behind the razor wire, can lay down their weapons and accept the offer of the Canadian forces to be placed in custody, and they should, they must. If they persist in staying there and they want to stay there themselves, let the children go. The children should be released; they should be in school.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: Otherwise they can confine themselves to the detoxification centre indefinitely. Either way, the ultimate result is going to be the same. They will have to submit themselves, as all Canadians must, to the Canadian criminal justice system. Members of this House have an opportunity today to speak with one voice in calling upon the warriors to lay down their arms and submit themselves now to one of the finest justice systems in the world, the justice system of Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: Once the guns are down—

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Aboriginal exceptions.

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend is quite right. There are very tragic exceptions to this and I will be happy not only to—

An hon. member: Aboriginal exceptions.

Mr. Mulroney: Well, indeed, and I will be very happy to deal with it because the fact that we have an excellent

justice system which stands up admirably in comparison to any other in the world does not mean that there have not been serious errors and serious abuses. As long as those errors and injustices arise, and they have in recent times affected particularly native peoples, that is a special tragedy and that is one that all members of the House want to correct.

Once the guns are down, we will be in a position to hand over the disputed land to the people of Kanestake. There will also be freedom to explore new ways to resolve their historical land claims. In the meantime, there is much to do and many legitimate grievances to address there and elsewhere in Canada.

Over the past year, we have quietly discussed an agenda with native leaders to address issues of concern to all of Canada's native peoples. It is time to begin to put this agenda into operation. Canada's original peoples deserve a special place in this country as our first citizens based on the aboriginal and treaty rights recognized in the Constitution. Those realities have often been denied over decades and centuries in Canada and it is time that we began the process of making up this injustice.

Our agenda will be anchored in reality. It is no myth that native leaders have too often been treated insensitively, unfairly and often times illegally since the days that the first Europeans set foot on this continent. Canadian history records that Indian decency was too often met with cynicism and that Indian generosity was too often repaid with exploitation.

The cultures of Canada's native peoples have been poorly understood and little valued. Many people still remember Indian children being punished at school for speaking their own languages.

The first Canadians, our first Canadians, were denied freedom of speech in their own land.

Thanks to the Indian Act of 1876, people who had never known national boundaries found that they could not even leave reserves—pitiful, mediocre reserves—without a pass. In fact, only in 1960—to show the dimensions of both the tardiness and the enormity of the tragedy—were Canadian Indians fully enfranchised. And I may say, because I will be unveiling a statue of the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson tomorrow, that this particular act was done while he was in the House and when the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker was the Prime