

Indian Act

Minister at least introduced an amendment which made it clear that band councils can involve the full membership of the band in setting out band membership criteria.

I think it is important to remember that we are dealing with 100 years of history. In that 100 years, many Indian systems of accountability were deliberately broken down by the agents of the Government. Because our Government has broken down Indian systems of accountability, we cannot simply walk away from the system, say that we are involved in decolonizing and that all we have to do is to sign our name to a document. It is more complex than that. I would have liked to have seen the Government include some of my amendments which provided for basic appeal processes and some basic accountability. Some bands might not wish to include it, but I believe most bands will do that of their own accord.

● (1620)

One of the most important amendments which, unfortunately, was ruled out of order because it infringes on the Government's financial prerogatives, would have provided funding and land for reinstated band members. The Minister talked about the three principles on which this Bill was constructed. I maintain there is a fourth principle which should have been included, that is, the principle of adequate funding and land for reinstated band members. The Minister talked about the need for reconciliation, and now is the time when reconciliation is badly needed. I want to emphasize that reconciliation will become impossible if government funds are not made available to deal with this situation. Witness after witness emphasized this point, yet the Government was not willing to write a basic financial provision into the legislation.

This is a great weakness in the Bill. The Minister in testimony admitted the appalling nature of Indian conditions across Canada. Those Hon. Members in the House right now are fully aware of the unemployment on Indian reserves. It is 80 per cent and 90 per cent in some cases. We are aware of the terrible housing and health statistics, the suicide rate, the incident of alcoholism and family violence. We know that these problems cannot be solved simply by throwing money at them, but we also know, or we should know and should recognize, that they will be made worse if we are not willing to provide the basic financial resources necessary to deal with them.

The Government's track record on providing necessary funding is so poor that Indian nations are quite correct in being very concerned and suspicious about any increase in on-reserve population. Budget shortfalls have been common for years, so they are not the specific problem of this Government. But the Indian nations have a special concern now because the lack of financial guarantees in Bill C-31 coincides with the secret Conservative task force studying Indian Affairs budgets. This is the same backroom approach which the Liberals used, and it is time, I think, Mr. Speaker, that we opened up a funding process instead of continuing to confine it to the back rooms.

The Indian people should be brought directly into the budget process. In April, Members of Parliament and the

Indian people first learned some of the details of what was cynically called in the Government's own document, "Operation Buffalo Jump" of the 1980s. That is the Conservative's secret report on how they could make cuts in Indian Affairs and other native programs. "Operation Buffalo Jump" attempts to walk away from the trust in and responsibility to the Indian people of the federal Government. The report, constructed totally in the back rooms without any Indian involvement, casts a very serious shadow on this Government's credibility on native issues in general and on this Bill in particular.

The Minister has given his personal word that the funds will be forthcoming to deal with any increased expenditures arising out of Bill C-31 on a case by case basis. But, Mr. Speaker, the personal word is the kind of style we should have left behind with John Munro and the Liberals. Personal word is not enough. It does not work. Ministers come and go, and in the meantime the Indian people get stuck with paying the bill.

We can look at the betrayal of senior citizens in the present Budget. The Indian people are aware of that as well. That makes them wonder very seriously how much the Government's commitment to provide financing for their needs really means. They have seen the Government's betrayal of senior citizens and wonder whether they are next. They saw the Nielsen task force working away while the Prime Minister, (Mr. Mulroney), the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Crombie) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) were meeting with Indian people at the First Ministers' Conference on aboriginal rights and the Constitution.

'Operation Buffalo Jump' is a reprint of the 1969 Liberal White Paper. It amounts to nothing more than a cruel blueprint to use Indians as the shock troops in the Government's fiscal policy. First, we send in the waves of senior citizens, then follow the Indians. It is going to be the same kind of massacre we saw at Galipoli. Even the name of the report 'Operation Buffalo Jump' is cynical, racist and objectionable on that basis.

With the appointment of a new Minister there was hope that Indian people would receive a better hearing from the Government. The land claims policy was going to be reviewed. Indian people now wonder where that review might take them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member but by virtue of our Standing Orders, only the Minister moving the motion and the critic of the Official Opposition has unlimited time. The Hon. Member's time is up unless the Hon. Member asks for consent to continue.

Mr. Manly: It is customary, Mr. Speaker, for the first speaker in the opposition Party to have extra time, and I would ask for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to grant the Hon. Member for Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands (Mr. Manly) extra time?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.