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Monday, April 25, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 25, 1994

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT RETIRING ALLOWANCES ACT

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John) moved that Bill C–208, an act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak about my first bill to be tabled in the House and why it should be adopted. This bill responds to the concerns expressed by many Canadians on MPs' pensions.

We all agree as members we are contributing substantially to our pension plan. It is true that only about one–quarter of the MPs elected will stay long enough to collect a pension. This being said, we should still move forward on this issue.

Is it fair for an MP to collect a pension after six years in the House, even if he or she is not of retirement age? Is it right for a former MP to receive a pension if at the same time he or she is working for the government?

The objectives of my bill are clear. This bill will prohibit former members of Parliament from collecting a pension while employed by the Government of Canada, a government agency or a federal crown corporation. Under this bill a former member could not collect a pension until the age of 60.

I know that the Prime Minister is concerned about the issue of severance pay. Not only did he raise his concerns last April 6 in Kamloops, but he raised them again on March 7 in the House. He said: ''There is no security of employment around here. Some people who come to Parliament when they quit find it is not easy to get re–established in private life''. This is true, but we all knew that when we ran as candidates. It is also true that a lot of former MPs have problems getting back into private life. However, we are not arguing that issue today.

(1105)

I understand that a case could be made for linking pension changes to severance packages. I suggest that if the Prime Minister wants to deal with the severance issue he can do it at a later date. Right now we should do something about pensions.

In the speech from the throne our government said: ''Measures to reform the pension plan of members of Parliament, including the elimination of double dipping, will be placed before you''. The government still has not introduced legislation to do that.

Indeed, there is a strong consensus on this issue from all parties in the House. During the last campaign the former Prime Minister said that she would introduce measures that would preclude any MP from collecting a pension before the age of 55. She also added that there would be no more double–dipping.

The leader of the NDP agreed with that statement in the House last year. The leader of the Reform Party has said that his party is the only federal political party to consistently advocate a change in the MP pension plan in order to bring the benefits in line with private sector standards. The Reform Party has said that it wants to postpone eligibility until at least age 60, and this bill does just that.

In his speech in Quebec on August 16, 1993 the Leader of the Official Opposition said: ''Bloc MPs would support the government if the previous Prime Minister, Campbell, were to recall Parliament to pass promised legislation amending the MPs' pension plan and preventing ex–MPs from holding government jobs while collecting their pensions''.

On that same day in Burlington, Ontario, our present Prime Minister urged previous Prime Minister Campbell to act quickly. He said: ''If Ms. Campbell wanted to do something about it she would have recalled the Parliament and in one day it would have passed''.

In response to the Vancouver *Sun* column ''Ask the Leader'', our present Prime Minister said that he believes such measures are necessary in order to restore Canadians' faith in politicians and to combat widespread voter cynicism, and I agree with him.

The time has come for all members of this House to show Canadians that we all were serious during the last campaign. After the election the Prime Minister said that his government wanted to wait for a report commissioned by Parliament on MPs' pay and perks before introducing legislation.

That report has been released and the government still has not introduced legislation to make the needed reforms to the pension plans of members of this House; reforms that are necessary, that Canadians want and that this government promised.

My bill today would make those reforms and so I urge its passage. Canadians want action and they want it now. Therefore, I would move that not withstanding any standing orders and usual practices of the House, Bill C–208, an act to amend the members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, be made votable and referred after second reading to a committee of the whole instead of to the legislative committee and that, unless otherwise disposed of, no later than five minutes before the end of the time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business today, any proceedings then before the House shall be interrupted and every question necessary to dispose of the said bill at all stages should be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

(1110)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Does the member for Saint John have unanimous consent to propose the motion to the House?

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Resuming debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill C–208, An Act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act.

As noted earlier, this bill comes at an awkward time. It would have been so much easier to have reviewed this subject immediately after the Conservative leadership race, during the summer, a summer when the then Conservative Leader, the hon. member for Vancouver Centre, British Columbia, crisscrossed the country from Halifax to Vancouver to Newfoundland on a pre–election campaign. It would have been easy to recall the House to give the members of the 34th Parliament the chance to debate fully the question of whether the provisions of a bill can apply retroactively.

It is not in our parliamentary tradition to introduce bills which apply retroactively and, when we do so, it is often only grudgingly, after having examined all of the ins and outs of the matter.

The current members of the 35th Parliament were elected in accordance with the rules that prevailed at the time and, clearly, they have some vested rights. It is obvious on reading Bill C–208 that it affects the vested rights of members elected to serve in the 35th Parliament.

If I understand correctly, Bill C–208 would apply only to members elected to sit in the next or 36th Parliament. This is similar to the decision reached by the Quebec National Assembly when it reviewed the members' pension plan.

Therefore, instead of conducting a pre–election campaign at the height of the summer, I think the party to which the hon. member for Saint John, New Brunswick, belongs should have been calling on its leadership, if there was any, to convene Parliament so that the issue could be debated and pension plan reform proposals could be applied to the current Parliament.

Bill C–208 is brief. It contains one provision with which I know most hon. colleagues will certainly agree, that is the provision which states that a former member who is receiving remuneration in whatever capacity from the federal government cannot at the same time collect a pension. Let us take, for example, the case of a former member who is appointed to a federal court bench. Personally, I feel it is wrong and somewhat contrary to common sense when a person can collect both a pension and a salary from the federal government. I feel the same way about persons working for various federal offices and government or parapublic agencies and collecting a pension at the same time.

In my view, the different levels of government in Canada should get together and agree to ban this practice from one province to another. For instance, there is something a little odd about a provincial deputy minister of justice receiving severance pay just because he is appointed to a federal court of appeal. Representatives of the various levels of government in Canada should sit down together to review the administration of public moneys in this area.

As for the second major provision of Bill C–208, namely the age restriction criteria whereby a former member cannot begin to collect a pension immediately unless that member has reached 55 or 60 years of age, this is indeed another matter.

(1115)

Many will say that a member has no business collecting a pension of $40,000 or so a year after just two terms of office, that is to say eight, nine or ten years depending on the constitutional limits, if he or she was a member of Cabinet and is making a career change. There is something wrong with that picture, however, and I think we should look at it.

Studies have demonstrated that, by the time some members who sat for two terms, having been elected twice, finish collecting the full pension to which they are entitled for life, they will have cost between $2.5 and $3.5 million to the public purse.

However, the bill introduced by the hon. member for Saint John, New Brunswick, has a flaw as I see it. There is a gap between the proposal for a minimum age of eligibility, whether 55 or 60 years old, as suggested in the hon. member's bill, and

the present situation where one can collect a pension immediately upon retiring.

Many members—with the kind of turnover we have here in the House of Commons, there were 200 new members elected in this 35th Parliament— find themselves in a difficult situation. Many of those members who were defeated in the last election—this is true of any election, but particularly of the last one because of the major changes that took place about six months ago, on October 25, 1993—may be finding themselves in dire straights. Perhaps, in fact very likely, we would need a sort of severance pay to help former members find a new job.

Members of Parliament who held professional positions have to quit or at least considerably neglect their careers to serve their constituents while they are sitting in the House of Commons. When they resume their careers after being defeated or upon retirement, they must rebuild their clientele.

Farmers who had leased their farms will also have to get reacquainted with new technology and take operations back in their own hands. This bill lacks transitory provisions, and there should be such provisions.

Members of Parliament who retire or are defeated often have to regain, pardon the expression, some sort of ''political virginity''. A member who used to work in communications, in a radio or TV station, would not be allowed to go back on air overnight as a political analyst. The station would say that he or she is too closely associated with a given political party, and should stand back for a while and come back a few months or even years down the road. In the meantime, the former member will be handed assignments in areas not closely related to the political arena that he or she knows well. The same thing happens in several other fields. You are told: ''Distance yourself from politics; work on your image and, soon, we will take you back''.

That is the time frame this bill does not cover, and that is why I find it very hard to say: Let us immediately stop paying benefits or annuities to members who retire or are defeated in an election; let us stop paying upon retirement and wait until former members reach the age of 55 or 60, without at the same time putting transitory provisions in place. I would have liked Bill C–208 to contain something specific in terms of transitory provisions.

We would do well to use Quebec's legislation, the legislation passed by the Quebec National Assembly, as a model to refine this bill in that regard. This government had indicated in its parliamentary calendar that this issue would be debated in the House and I would recommend that the various points I have made be taken into consideration when a government bill on the subject is tabled.

(1120)

[*English*]

Ms. Susan Whelan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, we have before us for discussion Bill C–208 which proposes amendments to the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, amendments which seek to end double dipping and delay commencement of pension benefits to a former member until he or she reaches age 60.

I will confine my remarks to the bill's treatment of double dipping. My hon. colleague from Nepean will address the problems raised by the proposed provisions dealing with delayed receipt of benefits to former members and survivors.

When I refer to double dipping I am referring to the simultaneous drawing of both a pension under the Members of Parliament Retirement Allowances Act and a salary or other payment from the Government of Canada. The government has announced that it intends to curtail this practice. Indeed, the right hon. Prime Minister has on several occasions stated that the government is committed to ending double dipping. The bill purports to do this but it must be said that the approach adopted here is seriously flawed.

First, the proposed section 13.1 would remove the re–employed former member's entitlement altogether rather than just suspend that entitlement during the period of re–employment.

Obvious inequities would then result since there is no provision to reinstate the former member's pension when his or her re–employment terminated as inevitably would occur. The bill would appear to impose a lifetime pension disentitlement for a former member. This surely could not have been its intent.

Second, the term ''remuneration'' is not defined and the proposed scope of the source of that remuneration is very wide. Crown corporation directors' fees and per diems for even short periods of part time service to the Government of Canada would be caught by this very broad definition, as would contract fees, even though receipt of pension had already been taken into account when those fees were set.

As the bill is drafted, receipt of any remuneration no matter how little the amount would disentitle a former member from receiving any pension at all. As I mentioned that disentitlement would appear to be for life.

Third, the bill provides no mechanism to allow the pension administration to monitor possible cases of re–employment. Therefore there would be no way of knowing if and when a former member started to receive remuneration in another capacity from the Government of Canada, especially since there is no requirement in the bill for former members to report their re–employment and remuneration.

This leads to a related problem. No provision is made in the bill for the recovery of overpayments of pension, overpayments which would inevitably arise since the administration would have no sure way of knowing that re–employment had occurred and that the pension entitlement should be terminated. Recovery of such overpayments could prove difficult, expensive and time consuming at a time when government resources must be husbanded very carefully.

In conclusion, the bill would put an end to double dipping but it would not do so in a fair and even–handed way. I wish to state again that the government fully intends to curtail this practice which has attracted so much criticism. However, it wants to adopt a more disciplined and integrated approach taking into account all aspects of a member of Parliament's compensation.

As hon. members are aware, the government has received the recommendations regarding members' compensation from a firm of consultants engaged by the previous government.

These recommendations have been referred to the Lapointe commission which must report to the House by mid–July of this year. Rather than rushing into law seriously flawed legislation such as the bill before us now, the more prudent approach for dealing with the issue of double dipping for persons under the pension plan seems to be to await the deliberations of the Lapointe commission. The recommendations of the commission can then be studied carefully in the course of the government's consideration of its options for reform of the pension plan, a consideration of options which would be carried out in a context of the overall compensation package provided for members of Parliament.

(1125)

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): Madam Speaker, after years of abusing the trust of the taxpayer with a pension plan only King Midas could have matched, we have a private member's bill from a Conservative MP.

Although I favour the two issues that are addressed in this private member's bill, as has already been mentioned there are some flaws in it. The best way to evaluate whether the bill is successful is to compare the Liberal approach, the Reform approach and the approach of the private member's bill. I leave it to you, my colleagues, and those watching today to decide which approach is best.

Before I begin this comparison I would like to look briefly at who seriously advocated pension reform in Canada in the past and why all of a sudden here we are in 1994 looking at a very small private member's bill.

To date no action has been taken by the Liberals other than after the recent election five Liberal MPs have been added to the long list of those collecting pensions. The Conservatives have taken no action to date either but if you look at the last election again there were 111 members of Parliament picking up a pension. Then we have the Conservative's private member's bill today. The Reform Party has had a policy in place for a number of years which I will describe a little later.

Let us look at the approach to MPs' pensions that has been taken by the major parties. I would like to go through the government first, the Liberal Party. As I said, five Liberal MPs have recently been put on to this pension plan and are now safely living on government pensions for the rest of their lives along with many other colleagues. In fact there are 397 individuals today on MPs' pensions.

The pensions range from about $28,000 to $84,000. The infamous red book suggests that the Liberals believe reform is necessary. I am not sure whether they are speaking about our party or the reform of the pension plan, probably a little bit of both. They suggest the pension regime of members of Parliament has been the focus of considerable controversy and is now the subject of an independent review which was mentioned here just briefly. The book also talks about the end to double dipping which this private member's bill actually does address. After all these years of milking the system the Liberal Party is now suggesting that it believes that reform of the pension plan is necessary.

The Liberal Party has recently paid for a study on parliamentarians' compensation although it has suggested that the Conservative Party implemented this study and it could do nothing about it. That was incorrect.

The original study was around $150,000. It could have been stopped once the election was over but it was not. Now the cost of this report is approximately $200,000–plus and the commission which was just talked about will cost about $300,000. The report contained some recommendations.

It is important to note that the report stated that MPs actually should get a 37 per cent pay increase. Liberals say it is not going to happen because we have deferred that for two years but it is in there.

The study suggests that MPs should get severance pay and that Senators should get an increase in pay. It also suggests a number of changes to the pension plan. One in particular suggests that the pension plan should be indexed annually to the excess of inflation over 3 per cent which is actually one of the most expensive parts of the pension plan.

This study is going to a commission. Where it goes from there we do not know but I suspect that we will see bits of it in the commission's report.

(1130)

We have already established that the Liberal government closely mirrors the previous Conservative government in many things, so let us not expect too much. If we look at the Conservative approach we do not need to talk too much about the performance of that group of politicians and their pension reform policy. The Canadian electorate said all there was to say about that in the last election. Since the last election, as I have said, we have 111 Conservative members of Parliament picking up pensions ranging from about $26,000 to $82,000.

This private member's bill addresses double dipping which is now defined as a former member of Parliament who is employed by the Government of Canada, an agency of the Government of Canada or a crown corporation. I am happy to see that defined because there was some question from time to time about what double dipping actually was.

It also covers vesting or collecting the payoff at age 60. There were some problems with that. What is not addressed here is that there are people in the country who could get elected at age 55 and under this private member's bill could get a pension at age 60. They would get it in five years, not six as it is today. We have to look at both these combinations.

This private member's bill reflects a modest attempt to correct the outrageous self–indulgence both Liberals and Conservatives have provided themselves over the years at the expense of the taxpayer. It is ironic after the last two decades when we have been going into debt year after year after year and overspending in our budgets that we are sitting here looking at a private member's bill. These kinds of things should have been looked at some time ago. It is a little bit but it is a little bit too late.

Since the beginning the Reform Party's policy has been to ensure that politicians could not collect a pension until age 60. We wanted to ensure that double dipping could not occur by two means. The first is no vesting of benefits, should a past MP obtain a position with the government or any of its agencies or corporations. The second most important aspect of double dipping is to eliminate all the patronage that is going on in the first place. The only way double dipping occurs is after an MP leaves his or her seat and gets appointed to this board, that board, this corporation and so on.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): The Liberals are heckling me. For those who are watching this debate on camera, they are heckling me. Quite recently we had three patronage appointments, and there is no reason to think that party is going to change that.

We want to end full indexing, to ensure all contribution criteria meet provisions of the Income Tax Act, which is not in here, and to allow an adequate sharing arrangement between government and the member. The current arrangement sees the taxpayer contributing about $5.97 for every $1 by the MP. We ought to ensure that pension benefits for MPs are brought in line with private sector standards.

There is sometimes talk that one of our members is double dipping. The definition of double dipping is an MP who is unelected or chooses not to run and gets a patronage appointment somewhere else. That is where the heckling comes in because they just love patronage over there.

When I signed my papers as an MP I refused to sign the pension papers because I did not want to participate in it. I got this letter back from the government: ''However, pursuant to the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, members are required to make pension contributions based on the amounts payable by way of sessional allowance''. The fact is that we cannot even stop getting this kind of stuff. Government parties have made it so difficult over the years that they get in the trough and cannot help but stay in the trough. No wonder people in the country are upset.

In conclusion we have to look at whether or not the real intent will be there, whether or not the Liberal government will actually take the steps forward to provide a reasonable pension plan that is in line with the private industry, matches the Income Tax Act, and so on and so forth. We have already seen that it is a party that will not accept the function of recall. It is into patronage. It has moved the NAFTA centre to Montreal and so on. I say it will not do so. If we want real reform in the pension we will have to look to Reformers.

(1135)

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C–208, an act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act.

While I commend the member for Saint John for putting the private member's bill forward, in my estimation it does not go far enough. My colleague dealt with the first part of it and I will deal with the second part.

It purports to deal with two aspects of the pension plan provided for former members of the House and former senators. It proposes amendments to the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act in an effort to provide a quick fix regarding two features of our pension plan which have attracted a good deal of criticism in the country. I am referring to the fact that the act places no restrictions on double dipping and permits a former member to begin drawing a pension immediately upon retirement regardless of his or her age.

At this point I should state clearly that the government is very much aware of the widespread concern of Canadians about the pension plan for members of Parliament. The government is committed to change but wishes to do so in a rational and comprehensive fashion, not piecemeal, which unfortunately is the approach adopted in the private member's bill.

It would be prudent to await the proposals of the Lapointe commission and modify the pension plan for members of Parliament in accordance with a more integrated and cohesive approach to the overall compensation package appropriate for parliamentarians.

My hon. colleague from Essex—Windsor has dealt ably with the issue of double dipping in the context of the amendments proposed in the bill. Therefore I shall direct my remarks to other deficiencies in these proposals, deficiencies which are serious enough that the intent of the bill could not be realized if it were to become law.

The major problem with the bill as it stands today is that it deals only with some of the benefits to which a former member is entitled. As hon. members may know, the amendments made to the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act in 1992 brought the pension plan into compliance with the Income Tax Act registration rules and essentially divided the pension plan into two parts: part I, the registered plan and part II, a retirement compensation arrangement.

The proposed amendments in the bill only deal with part I of the act, the registered plan, and purport to delay commencement of pension benefits under the registered plan until age 60. As an aside, these amendments do not even deal with all benefits to which a former member might be entitled under part I, since they do not address the special joint and survivor benefit which a former member may elect to receive under section 23 of the act in cases where a former member wishes to provide survivor benefit protection to a spouse he or she married after ceasing to be a member.

Not only is the proposed subsection 13.1(2) quite redundant, it fails to achieve its objective of delaying receipt of benefits until age 60. I would assume that is what the hon. member would like it to do since it does not amend part II of the act, the portion of the act which contains the provisions that allow for benefits to be paid prior to age 60.

Further, the proposed amendment seeks to delay commencement until age 60 but does not make any exception to that rule in the case where a former member became disabled after retirement but before he or she reached age 60. Surely it could not have been intended that in no circumstance would a benefit be payable to a former member who was unfortunate enough to become disabled prior to age 60.

Turning to the matter of the proposed companion changes to survivor benefits, hon. members should be aware that delaying receipt of survivor benefits until a deceased member or former member would have been 60 years of age is quite inconsistent with any other federal pension legislation and contrary to the standards set out in any pension benefits standards legislation in the country.

Such a measure could be characterized as regressive at best, not to mention slightly absurd in the case of children's benefits, since few such recipients would still qualify for benefits if they had to wait until their parents reached 60 years old. No provision is made for an intervening disability in these instances either.

(1140)

There are two further aspects of the survivor benefit proposed in the bill that are problematic. The first of these is that again the bill does not address the survivor benefits paid under part II of the act and does not therefore impose the delay until age 60 for these benefits.

Second, the provision that purports to delay payment until age 60 does not have any transitional arrangements and could have the effect of cutting off the benefits of those persons presently in receipt of survivor benefits who became entitled to them under the law as it now stands. It is far from clear that the proposed section 13.3 would prevent this from happening, given the wording of the proposed new section 24 of the act.

In conclusion the bill may be well intentioned but falls far short of achieving its objectives. Given its structural defects as drafted it could be said to raise questions of equity. As I mentioned earlier the government will be coming out with a report in July of this year.

I would like to quote from *Hansard* of March 5, 1991. I am on record as speaking in favour of amending the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act.

> I find it hypocritical that someone in the private sector who might get laid off from their job, or might be transferred to another company within the private sector in another area of Canada, does not have the same privileges as we do as members of Parliament under the present legislation.
>
> We have widows and widowers who are living on limited income. We have a country whose economy is very tight today. We have people who are unemployed and I think that we as members of Parliament must show some compassion and some consideration.

I am in support of amending the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. Parts I and II must both be amended. We cannot look at one in isolation of the other. I am pleased to speak to the bill. Again I commend the member for Saint John for taking this initiative and looking at it, but we need to go one step further to cover all aspects of the bill.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the bill today.

This bill to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act raised by my friend in the Conservative Party is a positive step and long overdue. The MPs pension plan is part of the reason Canadians are disillusioned with politics and with politicians.

The vote on October 26, 1993 to change the government in Ottawa was as a result of many things, not the least of which was the need to reform the MPs gold plated pension plan. Often in the House when the government enjoys a clear majority, the majority overrides voices in the opposition who are often and only repeating the frustrations of Canadians.

Government members protest constantly against the elected representatives who are only doing what they promised Canadians: to get rid of the obscene MPs pension plan for one. When I hear Liberal MPs protestations I am reminded of a phrase from literature to the effect: methinks thou doth protest too much.

It seems strange to be defending a Conservative motion which in essence has been part of the Reform Party platform over the last few years. It seems strange when other Reform MPs and I were elected on the basis of our promises and MP pension reform was high on the list.

One of the promises I made to constituents time and time again was to fight the current MP pension plan and change the system so that retiring MPs, those whom the voters have stated they have no confidence in, those who lost their jobs in the October federal election, would not be eligible for hefty pensions, at least not eligible until age 60.

Politicians must realize they should have no more rights than other Canadians in the private sector like the employees of Woodward's department store who had to face a changing world with no guarantees and certainly no gold plated pension plan.

(1145)

Defeated and retiring MPs will cost Canadians close to $2 million per year in pension payments on top of current pension payouts. Is this right? No, of course it is not right. The payouts are obscene. If the government hopes to restore confidence in the political process it must take quick action to scrap this ridiculous pension plan.

Part of our accountability and responsibility as members of Parliament must be reflected in our own pension plan. According to the Liberal Party platform the incoming government supports a review of the lucrative pension scheme with a special look at the age at which pensions begin to be collected. That is a good sign.

The pension plan is indefensible, even in good times when Ottawa's vaults are overflowing and the public is feeling wonderfully generous toward its politicians. In bad times when many Canadians are suffering and the government is hard pressed to find basic programs, this plan amounts to little more than robbery. There are probably east European dictators who never had it so good as retiring Canadian members of Parliament.

MPs should not be setting their own wages nor their own pensions. They should be set by an independent body which reflects a cross–section of Canadians. It could be businessmen, academics, professionals, home workers and many others. No group should police itself in our society or set its own wages when those wages come from the public purse.

It is hoped the Prime Minister will recognize the public hostility to this obscene plan. Premier Ralph Klein recognized the public hostility to a rich pension plan for MLAs in a time of hardship. His decision to kill the Alberta MLAs pension plan was probably the single most important factor in the re–election of the provincial Conservative government. It was also a factor that Prime Minister Kim Campbell fatally ignored when she set up a commission on federal pensions rather than act directly.

The Canadian people who heard former finance minister Michael Wilson promise in 1984 to reduce pensions were not fooled by more promises. Chrétien should take the right example: not Wilson, not Campbell, but that of Klein.

It may be that some form of taxpayer assisted federal pension plan should survive. There may in the end be justifications accepted by the public for a plan to assist politicians in retirement. These can be explored.

This bill does not mention the Reform Party's clause on stopping the indexation of the MPs pension plan. Here we have a pension plan where the Canadian taxpayers have to pay far more than their fair share in contributions. The added insult is in indexing.

Former Conservative cabinet minister Perrin Beatty, only 43, qualifies for a pension of over $70,000 annually until he is 60, at which time it will be adjusted to take into account the preceding 17 years of inflation. The Reform Party which has made MPs pensions an issue estimates that Beatty will collect more than $5 million in pension payments if he lives till 75.

When we become government we will continue as we have started. Even in opposition we have kept our word to the Canadian people. We have taken less in salary or in allowance, forgone other MPs benefits and pushed for changes in many areas, particularly parliamentary reform.

We will continue to fight for changes to the MPs pension plan, but not changes like those made by the previous government in January 1992. Those changes illustrate how excessive MPs benefits are.

One of the changes came about because the MPs benefits exceeded the limits allowed for registration under the Income Tax Act. The federal government therefore had to divide the pension plan into two separate sections to keep it registered. The first section, the retiring allowances account, met the requirements for registration while the second, the compensation arrangement account, fleshed out the plan so the MPs could still receive their lavish benefits.

A 1988 actuarial study of the plan revealed that the contributions made by the politicians, which were matched by the government, would fall $144 million short of paying for the MPs projected benefits. Therefore, in the January 1992 changes the government moved to make the plan self–sufficient.

First, the government provided a cash infusion to make up for the plan's accumulated shortfall, which by that time had risen to $158 million. Second, to ensure no further shortfalls would accumulate, the government had to choose one of a combination of the following scenarios. Either the MPs would have to reduce their pension benefits and/or increase their contributions, or the government would have to increase the amount of tax dollars being funnelled into the plan.

(1150)

You do not have to be a rocket scientist to figure out which route was chosen. Treasury Board decided that Canadian taxpayers would be more than willing to keep making up the difference so the MPs plan could keep its gold plating.

A ratio of one to one, one to two, but seven to one? While MPs contribute $7,000 to their pension plan on their $64,000 sessional allowance taxpayers have to contribute about $41,000 per year on behalf of each MP.

There is another aspect to the pensions which is equally insupportable, the right of retired MPs to go on collecting a pension even as they collect another federal public salary. I repeat federal. Former NDP leader Ed Broadbent is a good example, collecting both a handsome pension and a large salary, because of his appointment by Mulroney to a human rights agency.

I am listening to the frustrations coming from the other side. Another gross example is former Mulroney cabinet minister Benoit Bouchard who will collect both an MP—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry. I have tried to be very patient. I think the member is well aware that we do not call members of Parliament by their names. We refer to the position or the riding.

The member still has about a minute left, but would she please pay attention.

Mrs. Jennings: Madam Speaker, I thought you were going to tell me my time was up.

I was under the impression that if an MP was no longer an MP it was quite all right to mention their name.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): You did refer to the Prime Minister by name.

Mrs. Jennings: Getting back to federal pensions, the very first step in pension reform should be to outlaw that type of double dipping. MPs should not be permitted to collect a pension until they reach an age considered pensionable among the Canadian public, somewhere between the ages of 60 or 65.

Also the pension should bear some relationship to contributions. At present the taxpayer contributes at least five times as much as MPs do to the pension payouts. That is a ratio which is destined to grow.

Finally some leadership has to be shown from the political representatives who endlessly beseech Canadians to cut back, to reduce their expectations. These pleas lose their lustre when the politicians neatly exempt themselves from the sacrifices. Klein realized this. The Prime Minister probably does too. All he needs to do now is act.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, I would like to make four short points about the bill under consideration this morning.

The first point is that this is something the public cares very deeply about. I think we are all aware of that; all members who have spoken today on this topic have mentioned it. Because this is something the public cares about, it is something we should seriously consider.

In my experience nothing gets the public more riled than this whole subject of the members pension plan. This is for a couple of reasons.

One is because there is nobody else in the country who is able to command a pension for life after working only six years. Canadians feel it is fundamentally unfair that anyone should be able to do that. Another is that the pension plan is a very rich one, even if you discount the fact it can be earned after only six years. It is fully indexed and is based on 75 per cent of the best six consecutive years of earning. Again it is not something which is available to most Canadians.

Therefore it is fair to say it is something we should legitimately deal with because the public is demanding it be dealt with.

(1155)

The second point I would like to make is that change is very much needed in this pension plan. Canadian taxpayers are not able to fire us, to put it bluntly. If they lose confidence in us, if they feel we are not competent in the job we are doing and our performance is unsatisfactory, the taxpayers are not able to relieve us of our duties as can happen in private industry and in any other walk of life.

It adds insult to injury in their view when not only can they not get rid of us in between elections but even after an election if our performance has been unsatisfactory they have to pay us forever under a pension plan as long as we had been MPs for six years.

Canadians do feel that change is needed simply on the basis of equity. On the basis of the dollar figure Canadians feel that change is needed. As other members who have spoken have said, for each dollar an MP pays into the pension plan or did in 1993, the taxpayer contributed more than $6. That is a very high ratio of contributions of the person receiving the pension and the employer, who in this case is the public or the taxpayer.

In other words MPs pay about 20 per cent of the value of the plan. This compares to 40 per cent for federal public servants and about 35 per cent for public sector executives. Once again the percentage of contributions in the eyes of Canadians is inequitable.

Other members have also mentioned that of the MPs from the 1988–93 Parliament 134 will receive pensions now. Those will cost $5.5 million each and every year. That is an increase of 56 per cent over what was paid out in pensions to former MPs in the last fiscal year.

Again Canadians see this pension liability as one which is growing very rapidly. In a time when our tax resources are shrinking and the demands on them are increasingly competitive, Canadians are concerned even though it is a minuscule amount in terms of the overall budget. The percentage of growth and the growth of the liability does concern a lot of Canadians.

The average pension for those 134 MPs from the last Parliament is $41,450 per year and that will go up as the indexation goes up. This is true even though a number of those 134 former members of Parliament are not retired. They are working and some of them are even working for the federal government. Canadians do not see any equity in paying pensions to people who are quite able bodied and working and are able to support themselves. They are asking why pensions are paid to people who are working and are well able to work.

The last point I would like to make about the fact that change is needed is that a lot of our pension obligations are unfunded.

I have been contacted, as I am sure other members have, by members of the Public Service Alliance. They are concerned that there is an unfunded pension liability of about $100 billion for federal civil servants. They are concerned that this fund should be managed, should be funded, should be actuarially sound. They are concerned about their future pensions.

When Canadians are concerned about their future, their pensions, their retirement years, it is very difficult for them to feel positive about a group who again seem to be free or not subject to those kinds of uncertainties.

The third point I would like to touch on is what this bill proposes. It proposes essentially two things. One is that double dipping would end. In other words people who are entitled to members pensions but who are working for the federal government or crown corporations would not be entitled to pension moneys as long as they are employed by the federal government or by crown corporations. The second thing it would do would be to end any pension payments until at least age 60.

(1200)

I think it is fair to say that those are key elements of pension reform for members of Parliament that the Canadian public is asking for, but I very much agree with other members who have spoken on both sides of the House suggesting the bill does not go far enough, that this just touches on the need for pension reform but there are other elements that really need to be brought into a comprehensive reform of members' pensions.

While this is a good start and the two points are valid, there are other elements that need to be addressed.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1), this item is dropped from the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SAHTU DENE AND METIS LAND CLAIM SETTLEMENT ACT

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) moved that Bill C–16, an act to approve, give effect to and declare valid an agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada and the Dene of Colville Lake, Déline, Fort Good Hope, Fort Norman and the Metis of Fort Good Hope, Fort Norman and Norman Wells, as represented by the Sahtu Tribal Council, and to make related amendments to another act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I rise to address the House on Bill C–16, the Sahtu Dene and Metis Land Claim Settlement Act. I am honoured and pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of this bill. I urge hon. members to give this legislation their strong support and quick passage so that the Dene and Metis people of the Sahtu region can begin now to build a better future.

This agreement has been many years in the making. The Dene of the Mackenzie Valley filed a comprehensive claim with the federal government in 1976 and the Metis filed a claim the following year. These were among the first claims received after a Liberal government decided in 1973 to end the 50 year hiatus in treaty making in Canada.

This was the right decision. It avoided potentially protracted and expensive litigation. Court decisions have indicated that the best way to resolve land claims is through negotiation. Some 20 years later the settlement of outstanding land claims is an objective this government will be pursuing with a great deal of energy and commitment in the coming months.

The clear definition of aboriginal rights to land and resources is a crucial foundation for the long term success of self–government and the future aspirations and prosperity of dozens of aboriginal communities.

With that in mind we need to move quickly to clarify land and resource ownership in those regions of Canada where aboriginal right to land has not been satisfactorily dealt with, and we are committed to do so both through existing channels and with new approaches to resolve land claims.

We made clear our commitment to address outstanding land claims in ''Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada''. On page 96 of that document there is a very clear and concise statement of this government's intention toward aboriginal people: ''The priority of a Liberal government will be to assist aboriginal communities in their efforts to address the obstacles to their development and to help them marshal the human and physical resources necessary to build and sustain vibrant communities''.

Comprehensive land claim settlements take us a long way toward accomplishing this goal. By ensuring certainty of land ownership and providing fee simple title to large areas of land they remove some of the most significant obstacles to the economic development and diversification of aboriginal communities.

By affirming resource ownership and rights and by providing monetary compensation they give aboriginal beneficiaries the means to become self–reliant. By formalizing aboriginal participation in the decision making process, land claim settlement agreements enable aboriginal people, people like the Sahtu Dene and the Metis, to regain a measure of control over their lives and to restore pride and self–respect in their communities.

(1205)

The Sahtu claim was the second regional Dene and Metis agreement to be signed. A land claim agreement with the Gwich'in was finalized in July 1991, promulgated to December 1992 and is now being implemented.

The fact that we are addressing Bill C–16 today is testimony to the perseverance, strength and character of the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

I am particularly pleased for the elders among these two aboriginal groups. These individuals have suffered the longest, worked the hardest and provided the guidance and leadership that has brought this agreement before the House. They give the younger generations reason for hope.

The result of those years of perseverance is a modern day treaty that fulfils treaty 11, signed in 1921. With second reading debate we are now at a critical stage in the settlement process.

Let me remind my hon. colleagues that this land claim agreement has been overwhelmingly endorsed by the beneficiaries. Eight–seven per cent of the ballots cast by the Dene in the ratification vote supported the agreement and 99 per cent of the Metis who voted supported the agreement. I would also like to point out that this is the first land claim agreement in which the Metis have had a principal role.

This agreement has also been endorsed by the government of the Northwest Territories which was a key player in the negotiations and which will play a fundamental role in implementing the agreement. It has been praised by non–aboriginal residents and business interests in the Sahtu region because it will finally lay to rest issues of land ownership and resource rights that have stymied development in the settlement area.

Now it rests with this House to move the settlement agreement forward. By passing Bill C–16 we will be approving, giving effect to and declaring valid this agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada and the Dene of Colville Lake, Déline, Fort Good Hope and Fort Norman and the Metis of Fort Good Hope, Fort Norman and Norman Wells as represented by the Sahtu Tribal Council. We will also encourage resource development of the settlement area.

In the simplest of terms, Parliament is being asked to do its part to address the longstanding, legitimate land based claims of the Sahtu Dene and Metis and to help the north realize some of its economic potential.

We are being asked to ensure that their traditional lifestyles will not only survive but will flourish. We are being asked to put into action Canadians' commitment to share the potential of our nation.

I would like briefly to touch on a number of issues addressed in the Sahtu Dene and Metis land claims settlement that I know will be of interest to hon. members.

First, I want to make it clear that Bill C–16 provides that the Sahtu agreement will be a land claims agreement within the meaning of section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. This is extremely important because it means that the rights of the aboriginal participants to the agreement may not be arbitrarily affected or altered by any other person. However, this Constitution protection does not mean that the agreement forms part or alters the Constitution of Canada.

On the issue of land title, this agreement will give the 2,000 Dene and Metis beneficiaries collective ownership of approximately 41,000 square kilometres of land in the settlement area. On approximately 1,800 square kilometres of this area they will also own the sub–surface mineral rights. The Sahtu lands will be privately owned lands, not reserve lands under the Indian Act.

The quantum of land that was agreed upon in this land claim agreement is guaranteed to the Sahtu Dene and Metis forever. If any settlement lands were ever to be expropriated, which is extremely unlikely, they would be replaced with an equal amount of land elsewhere in the settlement area.

I can assure hon. members that the lands selected have a great meaning to the beneficiaries.

(1210)

The settlement agreement encompasses territory that has been occupied and used by many generations of Sahtu Dene and Metis. Settlement lands include traditional hunting and fishing areas as well as lands of historic and spiritual significance to the Dene and Metis. They also include lands which would bring economic benefit to the Dene and Metis. Subject to existing mineral interests, the Sahtu Dene and Metis will decide whether and how to explore and develop any sub–surface resources that they might own.

In addition to these revenue generating opportunities, the beneficiaries of this land claim agreement will seek payments totalling $75 million in 1990 dollars over the next 15 years.

These lands and these funds combined with a share of the resource royalties from projects in the Mackenzie Valley will give the Sahtu Dene and Metis the financial resources to support their own economic development initiatives. The money may also be used to support social, cultural, educational and political initiatives.

Most important, it will be used as the beneficiaries see fit. They, rather than the government, will have an increased say in how their communities are to develop.

A number of provisions of the agreement acknowledge the rights and interests of non–aboriginal people in the settlement area. For example, any third party rights, titles and interests that already exist on Sahtu lands when this legislation comes into force will be protected. As well, because the parcels of settlement lands are so large, there are provisions to allow access to the lands under certain circumstances by persons who are not Sahtu Dene or Metis. For example, members of the public may cross settlement land in order to exercise a right, interest or privilege on crown land that is adjacent to the Sahtu land.

In all cases, however, access to settlement land will be based on the conditions that no significant damage will be done to the land and that there will be no interference with Sahtu Dene and Metis use and enjoyment of their land.

I am pleased to note that the land claim agreement acknowledges the traditional subsistence lifestyle of the majority of the Dene and Metis in the Sahtu region. It guarantees them special wildlife harvesting rights in the settlement area, including the exclusive right to trap. The agreement also provides for compensation where developers cause provable damage to property or equipment used in harvesting wildlife or a loss of income from wildlife harvesting.

It also recognizes the importance of expanding the economic horizons for aboriginal people in the north. Toward this end, the agreement provides for economic development opportunities related to guiding, lodges, naturalist activities and commercial fishing.

For example, throughout the settlement area the Sahtu Dene and Metis will have the first opportunity to obtain new licences for commercial opportunities in wildlife harvesting, guiding and outfitting, naturalist activities and the keeping and breeding of wildlife species native to the settlement area.

The aboriginal beneficiaries will also be looking for employment and business opportunities that will arise once third party resource development projects get under way. The historic involvement of the Sahtu Dene and Metis in the Norman Wells project puts them in an excellent position to take advantage of opportunities that are expected to emerge in the oil and gas sector.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, the passage of Bill C–16 and the coming into force of the Land Claim Agreement will give the Sahtu Dene and Metis the opportunity to be really involved in the making of decisions which will have an impact on their environment and way of life.

Under this agreement, they are guaranteed a 50 per cent representation on all agencies concerned with renewable resource management, land development, and regulations regarding land and water use in the area covered by the agreement. Moreover, they will sit on the Mackenzie Valley Impact Review Boards.

[*English*]

Federal, territorial and municipal laws will apply to the Sahtu Dene and Metis and their land. However, if there is any conflict between those laws and this agreement, the agreement will apply.

(1215)

I am pleased to note that an arbitration panel will be established under the terms of this agreement so any disputes that arise can be settled without involving the courts.

The agreement also provides a framework for negotiating self–government. I know that many Sahtu Dene and Metis are looking with hope and confidence to the day when they might exercise jurisdiction in such areas as education, language, taxation, health and social services and the administration of justice.

We are proceeding with this land claim at this time for three basic reasons. The first is that an agreement has been signed on behalf of the crown and we are determined to live up to past commitments and to uphold the honour of the crown. Second, the agreement reflects the aspirations of the Sahtu Dene and Metis and addresses their legitimate claims. This agreement will guarantee a secure land and resource base for economic development and self–government. The third reason we are proceeding is because the resolution of outstanding land claims has become a priority for all Canadians.

This initiative has the support of people from coast to coast, aboriginal and non–aboriginal alike. Bill C–16 is clearly deserving of parliamentary support. I urge my hon. colleagues to do the right thing for the Sahtu Dene and Metis and the right thing for Canada by ensuring quick passage of this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint–Jean): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to address this House today to inform you that I and the party which I represent, the Bloc Quebecois, will be very pleased to support Bill C–16 for several reasons.

I would like to tell you that since I became Indian Affairs critic for the Official Opposition, this is probably the issue on which I have spent the most time. The procedure followed in this case is fairly typical and representative of what I intend to do from now on with government bills on Indian affairs.

This bill has many implications, and I will come back to them shortly. The people of Sahtu, who are very pleasant to deal with, came to meet me in my office; we went over the whole agreement as such and I was very glad to learn that the government had agreed to support Bill C–16 which would quickly implement an agreement reached on September 6.

Of course, representations were made from many quarters. As I said, those people are very pleasant to deal with and very persistent. This agreement is the result of a long struggle. From 1982 to 1991 or 1992, these people tried to negotiate it, but there were other agreements before, starting in 1921, formal agreements and also less formal agreements between the Whites at the time and the people of Sahtu.

So this agreement is very good for them and for us. The seniors, called elders, were very much involved. For them this agreement is very important for future generations and I think that they will be very satisfied.

The president, George Cleary, also came to my office with his delegation. As I just said, those people were persistent and I think that the agreement they have today is very worthwhile. I also hope that all members of this House will ensure that this bill can take effect fairly soon. Among the local associations that made representations to us are the Déline band of Fort Franklin, the Déline sub–band, the Fort Norman band, the Colville Lake band and the Fort Good Hope band.

Of course, these are important centres of social and economic activity in that region of the Mackenzie Valley and those people have communities within those socio–economic centres and they are all included in the agreement.

Speaking of local associations represented, there are also the Metis Nation of the Northwest Territories, local 60 in Fort Norman, local 59 and local 54; these are Metis groups that worked on this agreement and signed it. The agreement will affect some 1,755 Metis and Dene. The figures vary a little. Some talk about 2,000 but there is a general consensus that the agreement will affect between 1,700 and 2,000 people.

(1220)

Of course, Sahtu—it is important to know this—is the big lake in northern British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. The word means big bear in the Dene language. So right off the bat it is important to realize the significance of the words.

Earlier I talked about the 1921 treaty. It may have been the start of a more traditional system of management between the Whites and the Natives, and we see that this is now taking the form of a land claims treaty that is not in fact a self–government treaty. I could come back to that a little later.

The territory itself represents about 75 per cent of the area occupied by Nova Scotia. So it is a huge territory, to say the least, and it is already limited by other Native agreements. In particular, the Sahtu Tribal Council's current territory is limited to the northeast by the recently–signed Nunavut agreement and to the north by the Inuvialuit treaty.

I will now tell you the history of the five communities because I think it is important. The Colville Lake community lives on the ancestral lands of the Slave Dene. It was founded in 1962 and it is the only community in the Northwest Territories where everything is made out of roundwood logs, Madam Speaker. It is still typically, a very rustic, very nice, good–sized village. I did not visit it but I saw pictures, and everything is built out of roundwood logs.

Déline, which was founded in 1825 by Sir John Franklin, is also called Fort Franklin. It was Lord Franklin's winter headquarters. When oil was discovered in Norman Wells—I will come back to that later—in the 1920s, it was close to transportation routes and became a major trading post. At that time, the people of Bear Lake were still leading a nomadic existence, following a tradition which is several thousand years old. They travelled across their hunting grounds in pursuit of the animals they wanted to trap and hunt.

It is only since the 1960s and the early 1970s that the Dene have been living in Déline year–round. When these people became a little more sedentary in the 1970s, they built the village of Déline where they now live.

Fort Norman has long had great seasonal importance to the Dene. The Northwest Company was active in the 18th century. The trading post founded at Fort Norman in 1810 has been permanently occupied since 1872. It was then a trading post which became a permanent village in 1872.

Fort Good Hope is the oldest trading post of the Lower Mackenzie Valley. Although it lies inside the territory of the Northern Slave Dene, the Gwich'in and the Mountain, the Mackenzie Delta Inuit used to go there. So another important community is affected by this agreement.

Norman Wells was the first community in the Northwest Territories to depend exclusively on the development of non–renewable resources. It is where the first traces of oil were discovered. It is a place where the oil development reaches its full extent. In 1818 and 1819, oil was discovered in commercial quantities. In 1847, the collapse of oil prices created problems for the village.

Imperial and Canada are joint owners of operating oilfields. The Can Oil trail was laid out during World War II so that Norman Wells could send its premium–quality light oil, a strategic resource, to the Alaska Highway and to southern cities. Norman Wells is also the northern end of the oil pipeline going from the Northwest Territories to Zama in Alberta.

(1225)

I said earlier that the agreement was signed on September 6, 1993, in Fort Norman. According to our experts and researchers, the agreement is indeed protected by the Constitution as a modern treaty, in compliance with section 35. I said that between 1,700 and 2,000 Dene of the Sahtu region will be covered by the agreement and will be represented by the Sahtu Tribal Council.

In the region where those rights will apply, the agreement was approved by 85 per cent of the Dene and by 99 per cent of the Metis, while the rate of participation was close to 90 per cent.

You can see the efforts made by these people, who live in the very large territory of 280,000 square kilometres covered by the agreement. Such high participation and approval rates demonstrate how important the agreement is to those people, as well as their very positive attitude towards it.

I want to discuss the content of the agreement as regards the use of land and water. The Dene–Metis from the Sahtu region on the one hand, and the government on the other hand, will be equally represented on the land use planning boards regulating the use of land and water, and they will also be represented on an environmental council in the case of development proposals for the region. This is very important to these people.

I explained earlier the importance of traditions such as fishing, hunting, trapping, etc. Now, we also realize that, with the emergence of their new economy, these people want to try to reconcile in an effective way their new and former cultures. I am pleased to see that the government has acted on their claim regarding this aspect and that these people's representation will be equivalent to that of the government regarding any expansion project, and also that, in the field of environment, they will have the opportunity to provide an important input.

I want to point out that it is a land claim agreement—later I might give more details on the territory covered and on the agreement itself—which does not put an end to what are commonly referred to as self–government agreements. These are two very different things. In fact, the annex to the agreement before us today contains some draft agreement on eventual negotiations relating to the issue of self–government.

As you know, a number of things can be the object of a transfer of jurisdiction between the Crown and Indian bands. Very few such transfers are in the process of being made right now, but the agreement provides for that possibility regarding a number of issues, including education, justice, health care and police services. Indeed, now that a land claim has resulted in a formal agreement, once these people have developed their resources and built a solid base for their economic development, they will want to look at what issues eventual negotiations on self–government might include.

Again, this agreement does not put an end to self–government. In fact, I think that it is a starting point for self–government, because if there is no land claim, if there is no land on which to base future claims for transfers of jurisdiction, it is very difficult to look at the issue of self–government. Consequently, this is one thing which is taken care of with the conclusion of the agreement.

We are also pleased to see that the Sahtu Tribal Council will participate in any constitutional conference on the reform of the Northwest Territories' constitution. An arbitration board is about to be set up to avoid having to go to the courts and therefore avoid delays which can sometimes be very long and costly for these nations.

The Metis and Dene now get ownership title for over 41,000 square kilometres, of which 1,800 include mines and minerals. This is very important. This is a territory these people now own exclusively. Some compensation could even be awarded in cases of expropriation.

(1230)

In other words, should the government decide, although I heard the minister say it was unlikely that the government would be interested in acquiring land and decide to expropriate, but should this ever happen, these people made sure the agreement contained clauses under which compensation would consist of equivalent lands. This is very important to them. If the

government tries to expropriate 2,000 or 3,000 of the 41,000 square kilometres covered by the agreement, it will have to compensate by giving them the same amount of land somewhere else.

This is a very important point. The 41,000 square kilometres are not only part of the settlement but also belong to the Sahtu municipal lands. In other words, the five or six communities I mentioned earlier as well as other groups living in small villages are not only given lands immediately adjacent to their territory or villages but are also given ownership of all adjacent lands within the 41,000 square kilometres. On 1,800 square kilometres, rights to sub–surface resources the mineral rights will be included.

As far as financial compensation is concerned, I think it is a good settlement, both for the Crown and for the aboriginal people. They will receive a tax–free financial settlement in the amount of $75 million annually, over a period of 15 years. Every year, participants will receive 7.5 per cent of the first two million dollars of royalties on resources received by the government for that year, and 1.5 per cent of additional royalties on resources in the Mackenzie Valley.

There is a financial settlement and royalties on resources as well. Of course a percentage goes to the Crown, but the Sahtu tribal council benefits from it as well.

I think this is good for the economic development of the Dene and the Metis in that part of the country. For them, the settlement was a prerequisite for economic development and self–government, and the rest will follow. The financial compensation package is a case in point.

As for the other clauses in the agreement which I intend to discuss, we shall see that, on the economic development side, these people are ready to take control of their lives.

The main focus of the department of Indian affairs may well be to help aboriginal tribes and nations to take control of their lives and get rid of the dependency spirit fostered by the Indian Act.

I think that today we are witnessing a first step by aboriginal people toward economic development and, eventually, self–government.

Incidently, in Quebec we have some very good examples where this has been successful. Unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity nor, in fact, much time to compare the two agreements, but Quebec has set a good example, with its Cree and Naskapi legislation and the James Bay agreement, and I think we can say quite honestly that we pioneered the introduction of a degree of self–government around land claim settlements. I believe this bill is very similar in its treatment of the Metis and Dene in the Northwest Territories.

As far as the agreement itself is concerned, I will briefly discuss a few important points. I mentioned the wild life aspect and the possibility that these people would be represented on a kind of tribunal and consulted on environmental and economic development issues.

To them, wildlife is extremely important. As I pointed out, for thousands of years, until the beginning of the twentieth century, these people followed the caribou herds and other game. They were nomads. Their life style and habits were based on animal resources. The agreement contains provisions on wildlife, and we are very glad to see the agreement reflects their culture and the position of the Bloc Quebecois on the important jurisdictional aspects that must be included in this kind of bill.

(1235)

So the Renewable Resources Board will be composed of an equal number of Dene, Metis and government representatives and will manage wildlife in the region covered by the settlement. They will obtain specific rights concerning the management of wildlife, including the exclusive right to trap throughout the region covered by the agreement, the right to hunt, economic opportunities concerning the use of camps, guiding naturalist activities and commercial fishing.

Some people who are neither Dene nor Metis have lived in the region for some time. They will now have to reach an agreement with the band council in order to pursue their commercial activities. The agreement also mentions the importance for the band council of ensuring that wildlife is managed not only for subsistence but also on a commercial basis. Furthermore, the agreement provides that those who harm the environment by taking too many caribou or fish or who misuse the fishing or hunting equipment at their disposal will have to compensate the band council.

The agreement does not infringe on the ancestral political, social or other rights which the Dene or Metis may have. The Dene and Metis living in the region can register under the terms of this agreement. We know that there may be people who have lived on that territory from generation to generation but were not registered under the Indian Act; the agreement contains special provisions whereby these Dene and Metis can register within a certain period—I will not mention exactly any passage or provision, but they are indeed included in the agreement.

As for the native people or Canadian citizens living in the Mackenzie Valley, the valley covered by the agreement, who are not registered and are neither Dene nor Metis, the agreement allows them to register provided that a Sahtu community adopts them. It is important to emphasize that the agreement does not throw out people who have lived on the territory for a long time, as if to say to them: ''You are not Dene, you are not Metis, you have to leave the territory''. The agreement allows these people

to stay provided that they are accepted by one of the Sahtu communities.

The Sahtu lands will be private, not reserves, and that is important. I mentioned earlier that, since its inception, the Indian Act has made the Indians very dependent. The agreement before us frees the Indians from this dependence and gives them enough economic power and land to exercise their full autonomy. Although the agreement on self–government will come later, we note that this is a step in the right direction. We are pleased to see that the land will be private and not reserves.

Federal, territorial and municipal laws will apply and, in case of conflict, the agreement will prevail. That is important; it is another step to self–government and it says: ''The agreement between you and us will protect you''. For example, if there is conflict between a municipal by–law and the agreement, the agreement will prevail. The agreement will not set up a hermetically sealed territory. By that, I mean that we are not building a Berlin wall around a territory and saying that no one can go there.

(1240)

We are pleased to see that, as far as the public is concerned, the agreement contains provisions allowing the public access to the region.

However, if someone has in mind to start up a business within this territory, then naturally this is another matter. Under the current provisions the public will be allowed access to Sahtu land in order to reach an adjacent territory. Dealing with a territory covering 280,000 square kilometres, you cannot expect someone to make a detour around this vast expanse to reach an adjacent territory.

Therefore, members of the public wishing to travel through this region will have no problem doing so. Naturally they will have to comply with the regulations and designated areas. The agreement even contains provisions stipulating that members of the public will be able to hunt migratory birds, provided of course they comply with certain conditions to be determined by the band council.

Regarding access for developers, those who are already in the area will be able to remain there, subject, as always, to the approval of the band council. Indeed, this approval will be required, and even a right to appeal is provided.

One example of this arose when the lands in the Sahtu region were being selected. As you know, outfitters who have long been operating in this region need vast expanses of land to carry out their outfitting operations.

These outfitters renegotiated all of their systems and territories with the Sahtu and Metis band council, and agreements are now in place which allow these outfitters to continue using Sahtu lands.

Federal departments have been represented and consulted on countless occasions during the negotiation process. The same holds true for the government of the Northwest Territories which was part of the federal negotiating team.

As we can see, nothing was taken for granted. All parties, the federal and territorial governments as well as the representatives of the Sahtu band council, approached the task at hand very seriously and no one was left out of the process. The agreement meets with the approval of all parties.

The Sahtu were even consulted when the time came to draft the land claims bill. They told us so themselves. They will also be consulted on the drafting of the future Mackenzie Valley resources management legislation.

The territory in question does not take in all of the Mackenzie Valley. Therefore, it is extremely important, to them and to us, that it be made clear that when legislation, whether economic or social, is drafted for the rest of the Mackenzie Valley, they will be consulted. The agreement states that they will be consulted, that they will be abled to express their views and even participate in the process.

On certain reserves, the Dene themselves make the decision whether or not to allow exploration or resource development. They are not required to follow a particular course of action. Of course, within the 1,800 square kilometres referred to earlier, a band council can decide at any time to allow exploration, the conduct of a feasibility study or a geological study and, if there are resources in the subsoil, mining, quarrying, and so on.

This is all allowed under the provisions of the agreement before us.

As for present and future titles holders, they will have to negotiate with the Dene and Metis the use they want to make of those lands and waters. That is totally consistent with the principle of the agreement before us.

To wrap up regarding the contents of the agreement, negotiations were held from 1982 to 1990 to come to this agreement. Today, to become law, it will require unanimous consent from this House. So, I hope that, for the sake of expediency, we will have unanimous consent.

Other consensus were reached before coming to the product before us and I would like to mention some of the groups that have been consulted and various public consultation processes involved.

So, groups were consulted. Proper consideration was given to this. The people and organizations I am about to mention have taken part in the discussions to some extent. The Northwest Territories Chamber of Mines was one of them, as well as the Mining Association of Canada, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the North West Territory Wild Life

Federation, the Mackenzie Mountains outfitters—those who need large areas for their outfitting operations, as I said earlier—and the Ingraham Trail Association. Consultations took many forms. It was mentioned earlier that the agreement was approved by federal government. The agreement was signed by the federal government as well as the territorial government. The public meeting in Yellowknife was held as part of this consultation process.

(1245)

Communities were toured extensively. I was saying earlier that the agreement applies to an area of 281,000 square kilometres. You can imagine it was no small task to go and see 2,000 people who live in that area. But the results were highly conclusive, as I said earlier, with a positive vote from 85 per cent of the Dene and 99 per cent of the Metis.

Information brochures were distributed. Municipalities were involved in the lands screening process. A serious job has been done.

I would like to open a parenthesis here because the outlay of money required makes Canadian taxpayers jump. In fact, many people have commented to me, and I am sure that similar remarks were made to the hon. minister, that the department of Indian affairs was perhaps one of the least hit by cuts. Not only were there no cuts, but its budget has actually increased.

We must also understand what led to the Indian Act. I often tend to use the same example, namely an Indian village or reserve nearby. How much money goes to the village if we look at who built the town hall? Who built the hospital? Who built the schools? Who is in charge of the roads? Who is in charge of the water supply system? If we look at all this and at the money coming from various departments, we see that the department of Indian affairs looks after the reserve.

Although the amounts may look outrageously high, it must be understood that, as a trustee under the Indian Act, the federal government must look after the quality of life of the Natives who live on these reserves.

There are many other reasons why the budget was not cut. Yes, the budget has grown but so has the Native population. It does not mean that we want to remain a trustee forever. I think we all have an effort to make in this regard and, after listening to the minister's comments on this subject, I feel that he, too, wants to revoke the Indian Act as quickly as possible.

How will we proceed? We have a typical example before us today. Without the Dene and the Metis achieving self–government, which will come later, we can still see that it is a step in the right direction. The money the government was going to spend on these bands should be reduced to allow for its gradual withdrawal and to let Natives control their own economic development and achieve full self–government in the long term.

We now understand why, in a public finance management context, the department may not have been hit by cutbacks. There is also the whole notion that, since the government wants Natives to take control of their own destiny, it will have to invest the amounts resulting from that decision and allowing us to initiate a negotiating process. That is what I tell people to explain why we in the Bloc Quebecois see an increase in the Indian Affairs budget. We must also remember that, historically, we exploited the lands and resources of these people and confined them to parcels of land representing perhaps 1 per cent of the area they used to occupy.

In closing, a last word on their languages and cultures because I think it is important.

(1250)

The Eskimo and Dene languages are not at all related. Even though these nations have long lived close from one another, we recognize that the two cultures are distinct. Even though these people have been hunting, trapping and fishing forever, we recognize their respective specificity regarding the land they occupied. They have such precise expressions relating to nature that there is indeed a separation between the two languages. For example, the Eskimo language has 60 terms for ''snow''. That language has all kinds of variations and nuances regarding snow. Because of this degree of specificity, it is understandable that the languages are not necessarily compatible, depending on what part of the territory one lives in.

As for culture, these people are fishermen; they have always been close to nature, and the agreement before us today will bring them closer to an economic development which will enable them to manage their own natural resources. I think that the agreement ensures a happy union between the two cultures, and that it reflects a deep respect for their traditions and heritage. It could be the start of an economic development somewhat closer to our own culture.

For all these reasons, and after a thorough review of the agreement, the legislation and the representations made by the Metis and Dene, I am pleased to say that the Bloc Quebecois supports Bill C–16. I hope that all members will share our view, so that we can speed up the implementation of this agreement.

[*English*]

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Madam Speaker, it must be spring. The sun coming through those stained glass windows is taking my breath away.

As spokesperson on aboriginal affairs for the Reform Party of Canada I take great pleasure in opening debate on second reading of Bill C–16, which would have the effect of approving, giving effect to and declaring valid the Sahtu Dene and Metis comprehensive land claim agreement signed September 6, 1993.

This agreement is comprehensive and complex in scope and far–reaching in consequences. Along with numerous appendices it comprises several hundred pages with many clauses and subclauses of considerable complexity.

My party has some very serious reservations about the direction in which land claim settlements in the north have gone in general and specific concerns relating to this agreement in particular. I intend to point out some of them and I am sure that my colleagues will add further to what I have to say. Many of our members wish to speak on this bill.

I want to emphasize at the outset that my criticism is directed to government policy toward the native people. In many respects it is not achieving the desirable result of improving unacceptable social and economic situations in which many of our native people find themselves or providing opportunities which could encourage and assist many of them to take their full place in Canadian society.

At this time I would like to explain a little bit about my background. I have worked in many locations on the B.C. coast in the forest industry. Twenty–two yeas ago I was supervising tree planting and forestry crews in the Chemainus area on Vancouver Island with natives as crew and charge–hand. This connection with native forestry crews continued in Ucluelet and in the Queen Charlotte Islands. The workforce in the logging operation on the Queen Charlotte Islands was very integrated. Individual racial status was often not known nor of consequence, which is as it should be in my view.

(1255)

When one lives, works and volunteers in these small communities there is sensitivity that respects cultural differences. I have shared joy and grief and I am aware of many of the subtleties of native culture.

I so much remember my Haida friend, on hearing that I was leaving the Charlottes, saying to me: ''John, many people have come to the Charlottes, worked, and then left without contributing a thing. I can tell you that you are an exception because you have made this a better place''. Madam Speaker, these words meant so much to me. It is so easy to become polarized in society, particularly when this suits someone's political agenda. We all have a responsibility to be constructive wherever possible.

Returning to debate on Bill C–16, every time I set out to analyse this agreement I return to the same question. Will the Sahtu Dene and Metis people be better off after the agreement is in place than before or will they not? The agreement requires surrender of all further land claim interest, creates fee simple ownership without creating reserves, and maintains a tax regime for individual Dene and Metis of the Sahtu the same as that of any ordinary person. They pay tax on income earned. These are enlightened provisions with which I concur.

My primary reasons for speaking in opposition to the bill are threefold. First, there is no legal rationale for this massive fee simple transfer of land. Second, a new bureaucracy is created. Third, the agreement in all its complexity is to be constitutionally entrenched.

We are dealing with very substantial benefits in land and dollars and other rights to a relatively small population over a massive land area. To be specific, the Sahtu settlement area covered by the agreement we are discussing today covers 280,000 square kilometres or 108,200 square miles. It is an area 50 times the size of Prince Edward Island, five times the size of Nova Scotia, or 30 per cent of the size of British Columbia.

A portion within this massive land area will be conveyed outright to the Sahtu Dene and Metis. Specifically they will receive title in fee simple to 41,000 square kilometres or 16,000 square miles. This is an area seven times the size of Prince Edward Island or three–quarters the size of Nova Scotia.

In addition to these land entitlements the Sahtu Tribal Council will receive each year for the next 15 years a sum of money totalling approximately $130 million. The Sahtu Tribal Council will also receive from government a portion of the royalties received from oil and gas exploration within the settlement area equivalent to 7.5 per cent of the first $2 million in royalties each year and 1.5 per cent of all royalties over and above the $2 million.

Non–share or communal settlement corporations are to be established to receive these capital funds and to dispense them for the activities and details and benefits described in detail in schedules I and II of chapter 8 of the agreement. These activities and benefits include education and training, supplementary funding for a wide range of existing government programs, loans or grants to low income people for certain purposes, housing, other public services, heritage preservation, economic development loans or guarantees, recreational facilities, elders assistance, one–time individual grants to all of $3,500 plus consumer price index adjustment to the date of payment, administrative costs, and qualified trusts investments.

(1300)

In addition to all of this, the federal government is committed to taking measures to support the traditional economy and to assist business development. Moreover nothing in this agreement affects the participant's right to receive benefits from any existing or future constitutional rights for aboriginal people generally.

This is an enormous package of benefits and one cannot help but be struck with the fact there are so few people who stand to receive them. The Sahtu ratification committee has provided us with the most recent count of participants in the settlement area. It numbers 982 adults, that is 829 Dene and 153 Metis, and 773 children for a total of 1,755 people.

I would ask the minister as to the rationale the government has applied in arriving at this huge package of benefits for such a relatively small number. How has the sum of $130 million been arrived at? Is there any indication it is appropriate to the needs of the participants? Will this enormously generous package of benefits result in the regular programs available to native peoples being phased out? There is no indication in the agreement that this is to be so. In fact, the very opposite is said to be the case.

A very disturbing aspect of this agreement is the fact that a massive area of land will be forever removed from the public lands of Canada and conveyed outright. An area equivalent to three–quarters the size of Nova Scotia will be conveyed to a collectivity totalling 1,755 people. In our view, conveyances of this kind are unnecessary, should not be made and are not in keeping with what the courts of Canada have found to constitute aboriginal rights.

The area north of the 60th parallel throughout Canada has always been considered to be a part of the public lands of Canada in which all Canadians share an interest. This is the fourth land claim settlement undertaken by recent federal governments in the territories. It is apparent there is very little left of the Northwest Territories which has not either been conveyed outright to various bands or over which they have a substantial measure of control.

It is apparent it is the intention of successive governments of Canada to blanket all of Canada's north with land claim settlements of this kind. One could understand granting to a sparse northern population traditional rights of hunting, fishing and trapping, subject to third party interests. But it is quite another matter to convey the outright ownership of vast territories of land. It is not necessary and my party opposes it.

It is noted that subsurface rights are also transferred under a portion of the property to be conveyed outright to the Sahtu Dene and Metis under this agreement. I wonder if the minister can tell us if the Government of Canada has any idea of the potential in mineral and oil and gas exploration that exists in respect of these subsurface rights. If not, this represents a potential transfer of unknown proportions.

We do not believe that land claim settlements of this kind should be open–ended or represent a blank cheque. After all, these are the public lands of Canada and the Government of Canada has a duty to all Canadians to administer them in the best interests of all. Massive transfers run contrary to this principle.

The agreement sets out a plethora of new administrative tribunals and other bureaucratic instruments that are going to be established. The same can be said to have been the case in regard to the three previous land claim settlements in the territories. In fact in the case of the Nunavut agreement, a whole new government is proposed to be established: a legislature and a court system including the Supreme Court of Nunavut and the court of appeal.

(1305)

In the case of the agreement before us today, it is noted that five renewable resource councils are to be established for each of the Sahtu communities of Colville Lake, Déline, Fort Norman, Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells to manage the exercise of harvesting rights.

A renewable resource board is to be established as the main instrument of wildlife management in the settlement area. Six members are to be nominated by the government and three by the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

An arbitration panel is to be established to attempt to settle disputes relating to this agreement without going to court. A land use planning board is to be established to prepare a land use plan providing for the conservation, development and utilization of land, resources and water in the settlement area. Again the Sahtu Dene and Metis can nominate 50 per cent membership on such a board.

A land and water board is to be established to regulate all land and water use within the settlement area. The environment impact review board and the surface rights board established to implement the earlier Gwich'in agreement are to have jurisdiction over the area with special panels established with the Sahtu tribal council having the right to nominate half of the members.

One has to question the necessity of setting up still another plethora of boards, commissions and instrumentalities within the Northwest Territories. The fact of the matter is that most of these functions are now being administered by existing instrumentalities of either the Government of the Northwest Territories or the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

There is no obvious consideration in the agreement given to winding down existing boards. Layer of government upon layer of government in the sparsely populated Northwest Territories is not the way to go. We are in danger of turning a sparse population into a bevy of bureaucrats, yet one of the main stated purposes of the agreement is to permit pursuit of a traditional livelihood and way of life.

Later this year the government is expected to introduce the Mackenzie Valley resource management act which it is said will fulfil the resource requirements of the various regional land

claim settlements in the western Arctic. In addition it will bring a new system of resource management to the Mackenzie Valley. Indications are that this act will create still additional boards to co–ordinate the activities of the others. Where will it end, bureaucracy on top of bureaucracy?

The agreement provides for a most elaborate process of negotiations in the future to conclude agreements on Sahtu Dene and Metis self–government. This framework agreement is set out in appendix B of the agreement. It is important to note this framework agreement contemplates negotiations on the transfer of legislative–making powers to the Sahtu Dene and Metis over a long list of 18 subject matters.

One has to question the necessity of this given the fact the agreement we are debating today deals with virtually every aspect of these people's lives. The real question is: Is self–government necessary or appropriate for so few people scattered over such a wide area? Whether or not a self–government agreement is negotiated remains for the outcome of future negotiations.

(1310)

I would stress the fact that self–government arrangements or agreements must provide that the laws passed by legislative bodies and governments of the aboriginal peoples and the administrative practices of such governments must comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. To be certain this will be the case, it may well be necessary to amend section 32 of the Constitution to specifically provide that the legislation passed and administrative action taken by aboriginal governments will be subject to the charter.

Perhaps the minister could advise the House whether the Minister of Justice has examined this issue and expressed an opinion as to whether or not the actions of aboriginal governments are now covered by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, or whether an amendment to the Constitution is required.

If approved, Bill C–16 constitutionalizes the agreement within the meaning of section 35 of the amendments to the Canadian Constitution which came into force in 1982. While the full scope of this constitutional protection is not clear, it almost certainly means the agreement can only be amended by resorting to the appropriate part of the amending formula set out in the Constitution. If it be otherwise, constitutional protection means nothing.

When one looks at the amending formula in the Constitution there are no less than six different formulae, only one of which is designed to be used in a particular circumstance. The fact of the matter is that none of them fit the case of an agreement entered into by the Government of Canada and a tribal council of native peoples. When the amending formula was designed there was no thought given to devising constitutionally entrenched land claim agreements between an Indian band and the Government of Canada.

If this had been an agreement between the Government of Canada and a single province then section 43 would apply and the agreement could only be amended by consent of both the provincial legislature and the Government of Canada. However, the Sahtu Tribal Council is not a province and it is unclear how this agreement can be amended.

Section 41, which is the general amending formula, might be the only amending formula available in this case. The irony is that this general amending formula requires not only a resolution of Parliament, but also of at least seven provincial legislatures. Of course this is totally inappropriate.

There are two aspects of constitutional entrenchment that cause me concern. First, this is a complicated agreement. I think it unwise to constitutionalize such detail given the uncertainty as to how it can be properly amended.

I am well aware clause 3.1.26 of the agreement provides that once the agreement is in force it may be amended by consent of the cabinet and the Sahtu Tribal Council. If this is so, it is difficult to see that the agreement has protection under section 35 of the Constitution.

My second concern is to question the wisdom of entrenching all of the detailed provisions of the agreement until it has been in force for a period of time to consider whether or not it is workable.

It would be preferable to constitutionalize the land rights and perhaps the other benefits to be paid. All of the administrative and regulatory provisions should not be constitutionally entrenched to ensure flexibility as circumstances dictate.

(1315)

Who are we to say we know what is best for future generations in those areas? If there is to be certainty, finality and stability to these land claim agreements, there must be the extinguishment of any claim to other undefined and uncertain aboriginal rights over land that might be put forward in the future.

I am therefore pleased to see under clause 3(1)(11) that in consideration of the rights and benefits provided under this agreement, the Sahtu Dene and Metis release and surrender to the Government of Canada all their claims, rights, title and interests if any to other lands and waters anywhere in Canada.

I am pleased to see such a provision in this agreement. It is rumoured that the minister does not favour extinguishment clauses in agreements of this kind and that he has instructed departmental staff to expunge from their vocabulary the word extinguishment.

I do not know whether this is in fact the case but if it is, I say with the greatest of respect to the minister that it is the wrong course for him to take. I say that because the content of these agreements represents substantial concessions from government to the native people and the most reasonable quid pro quo should be for the final resolution of outstanding aboriginal claims.

To enter into these agreements with the prospect of having to do it again a few years down the road is a prospect that should not be entertained by government. Although there is an extinguishment clause, the agreement provides that it in no way affects the right of the Sahtu Dene and Metis to participate in any benefit from any existing or future constitutional rights extended to aboriginal people or their right to continue to benefit from all government native programs.

What is missing in this agreement is any indication that if it proves to be successful over a period of time, financial assistance and government native programs of a general nature can be phased out. All of this is at the expense of the Canadian taxpayer and surely the objective is to provide self–sufficiency and ultimately the removal of the need for government assistance beyond that available to ordinary Canadians.

I would like to have seen more of an indication that this is the direction in which the government wishes to go. One should also ask what we do if this agreement turns out to be unsuccessful over a period of years.

My final point concerns the tendency of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to take a decidedly advocate role on behalf of the native peoples. I can understand that this is its mandate up to a point but with issues such as conveying large areas of public lands, the actions of the department should be in the best interests of all Canadians.

Too often these agreements are worked out behind closed doors with the ordinary Canadian in blissful ignorance of what is going on. I am delighted that the Sahtu agreement is being debated at some length is this House, unlike earlier north of 60 agreements. In future it would be advantageous to determine a mechanism for debate at a much earlier stage than merely at ratification. I commend this approach to the minister for his consideration.

I regretfully conclude that the major beneficiaries of this agreement are negotiators, advisers and lawyers. I have concerns that the average Sahtu Dene or Metis may be no further ahead in the long run as a result of this agreement. I wish them well.

(1320)

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, I rise in support of Bill C–16, the Sahtu Dene and Metis Land Claim Settlement act.

As previous members have described, this is a claim which deals with that part of the Mackenzie Valley which involves Great Bear Lake and the area to the west and the bands that live in those areas.

I am extremely pleased to speak in support of this legislation. It is another example of the government's commitment to build partnerships with aboriginal peoples, partnerships based on mutual respect.

The resolution of native land claims is a major part of that commitment. The federal government is committed to significantly increasing the rate of land claims settlement. It has been seeking new ways to resolve impediments that slow that process down.

I would like to give members of this House some background to the Sahtu land claim agreement as an example of the claims negotiation process. I would like to describe what comprehensive claims are and provide some details of the process that is followed to successfully conclude them.

First, I will give a few highlights of the evolution of the concept of aboriginal rights in the context of land claims. Protecting lands occupied by aboriginal peoples from outside acquisition can be traced to the royal proclamation of 1763. With Confederation, Canada assumed responsibility for applying this principle.

The common law concept of aboriginal rights was addressed in 1973 in a Supreme Court case which acknowledged the existence of aboriginal title in Canadian law. Six years later in 1979 a common law test for continuing aboriginal rights was established in another federal court decision.

These two groundbreaking decisions were followed by the recognition of the central importance of the concept of aboriginal rights to aboriginal peoples in the Canadian Constitution, specifically section 35(1). In 1990 the Sparrow case tried before the Supreme Court provided the first analysis of the implication of this recognition.

All these decisions established that the exercise of aboriginal rights could be regulated by government. The court also set out strict tests which were to be applied to determine if government interference with section 35 rights was justified in specific cases. The court has also concluded that rights are unique to each aboriginal group. Given that the rights are common law and not written down their extent and nature have been the subject of considerable debate.

Before these court decisions were enacted defining the special rights of aboriginal groups within treaties had long been an important aspect of the relationship between aboriginal peoples and the crown. As well the evolution and development of the federal government's land claims policy has been closely linked to court decisions, particularly the decisions that I mentioned earlier.

To address any uncertainty created by the decisions the federal government announced that it was willing to negotiate land claims settlements with native peoples. As the policy developed, claims were divided into two broad categories, comprehensive and specific.

Comprehensive claims are based on the concept of continuing aboriginal rights and title which have not been dealt with by treaty or other legal means. The courts have emphasized that the proper way to resolve outstanding land claims is through agreements negotiated fairly by the affected parties.

Specific claims, on the other hand, arise from the alleged non–fulfilment of Indian treaties and other lawful obligations or the improper administration of lands and other assets under the Indian Act.

All these court decisions and constitutional guarantees provided the background within which the Sahtu agreement was negotiated.

(1325)

To further describe this process I would like to list the objectives of comprehensive claims settlements, of which this is an extremely important example.

The primary purpose is to conclude agreements with aboriginal groups that will resolve the debates and legal ambiguities associated with the common law concept of aboriginal rights and title.

Uncertainty with respect to the legal status of lands and resources created by a lack of political agreement with aboriginal groups has been a barrier to economic development for all Canadians and has hindered the full participation of aboriginal peoples in land and resource management.

The comprehensive claims process is intended to lead to agreement on special rights aboriginal peoples will have in the future with respect to lands and resources. It is not an attempt to define what rights they may have had in the past.

The process of comprehensive claims settlement has five stages. The first is initial negotiation when issues are identified for discussion. The second is substantive negotiation when issues are discussed to produce the agreement in principle that contains all the features of the eventual settlement. The third is finalization when all parties formalize decisions needed in the agreement in principle to produce a final agreement. The fourth stage is enactment of settlement legislation which brings the agreement into force. The fifth stage is the implementation of settlement legislation when the terms of the agreement are carried out by all parties.

During the initial and substantive stages, the first two stages I mentioned of the settlement process, aboriginal groups may obtain loans from the government to hire professional and technical staff to help them prepare and negotiate their claims.

Most of the lands and resources that are subject of negotiations and that are required for the settlement of comprehensive claims are owned by a province. Because of this the federal government feels that provincial governments must participate in the often complex negotiations and must contribute to the provision of claims benefits to aboriginal groups.

In Yukon and Northwest Territories most lands and resources fall under federal jurisdiction. Nevertheless, territorial governments participate fully in claims negotiations and have made commitments to aboriginal groups through claims settlements. This was certainly the case of the Sahtu agreement. The Northwest Territories government was an active participant in all deliberations.

As in all deliberations, including those leading up to Bill C–16, the scope of discussions was defined so as to arrive at a fair and just resolution of the outstanding claim in a manner that would uphold the honour of the crown.

As well, settlements including the one before us today are designed to ensure that the interests of aboriginal groups in resource management and environmental protection are recognized and that claimants share in the benefits of development. A number of these points were mentioned in previous speeches.

To achieve these objectives settlement agreements must define a wide range of rights and benefits to be exercised and enjoyed by claimant groups. These rights and benefits usually include full ownership of certain lands in the area covered by the settlement, guaranteed wildlife harvesting rights, guaranteed participation in land, water, wildlife and environmental management throughout the settlement area, financial compensation, resource revenue sharing and specific measures to stimulate economic development and a role in the management of heritage resources and parks in the settlement area.

The rights and benefits of the Sahtu Dene and Metis in this particular case have been described by the minister and other speakers today.

Members should know that settlement rights are constitutionally protected and cannot be altered without the concurrence of claimant groups. A claimant group may retain any aboriginal rights that it may have had with respect to the lands it will hold following the settlement so long as such rights are consistent with the final agreement. As well those aboriginal rights that are not related to land and resources, or to other subjects under negotiation, will not be affected by the exchange of rights in the negotiated settlement.

(1330)

Resource revenue sharing is negotiated so that the group can share federal royalties derived from resource extraction throughout the area covered by the group's settlement agreement.

Enhanced aboriginal involvement in environmental management is also provided for. Such arrangements, however, recognize that government has an overriding obligation to ensure resource conservation, to protect the interests of all users, to respect international agreements and to manage renewable resources within its jurisdiction.

If an aboriginal group's traditional activities have extended to offshore areas, their claim settlement may include offshore wildlife harvesting rights.

The House should be aware that in its efforts to clarify the rights of aboriginal people the federal government does not intend to diminish the rights of others. Public and third party interests will be respected in the negotiation of claim settlements and if affected they will be dealt with equitably.

I hope my colleagues appreciate the long and complex process that has brought us to second reading of Bill C–16. I urge members to support the bill. Its passage will benefit all Canadians as well as help First Nations become strong and prosperous. I hope all bands associated with the Sahtu Tribal Council will have a happy and prosperous future as a result of this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint–Jean): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the hon. member's speech, and I wish he would expand on the five stages and the process around what is referred to in English as a comprehensive agreement. The first two stages the hon. member mentioned were initial negotiations, when issues are identified for discussion, and substantive negotiations to identify all aspects of the issues, the entire process being financed by the federal government.

Earlier in my speech, I said that, to justify raising the Indian Affairs budget, perhaps the government would like to give us a preview of its plans for further negotiations. Could the hon. member tell us whether the Liberal government plans to increase the level and number of negotiations of the kind we are discussing today, which would partly justify maintaining and even increasing the Indian Affairs budget?

I would also appreciate it if he would share with us his views on the involvement of the provincial governments in these agreements, although I am aware that today we have the involvement of the government of the Northwest Territories, which is not quite a provincial government. I would appreciate it if he would explain how he sees the involvement of the provincial governments in the negotiations around land claims.

[*English*]

Mr. Adams: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his interest and his questions. I listened with great interest to his remarks.

I made it clear that the government was very keen to move forward with claims settlements. I am afraid I cannot comment on the details of the budget. Unlike the hon. member this is not one of my specialty areas. However I would be glad to find out the relationship between our plans to speed up negotiations and the budget, if he so wishes.

With regard to the question of involvement of the provinces, in my speech I specifically mentioned that the case of the Northwest Territories was quite special. In that area the federal government still has a great deal of control. Nevertheless, despite that, the federal government involved the NWT government in these negotiations because it was the proper thing to do.

As I also pointed out, if that is proper in the case of the NWT government, where I suppose it could be argued that the federal government need not have involved that level of government, it is even more true in the case of the provinces. The federal government will involve the provinces in equivalent negotiations in the future.

(1335)

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the presentation and I have a couple of questions for the member.

The member outlined two different types of land claims in Canada and how they are dealt with. He explained that the particular agreement falls under the comprehensive land claim policy which states that under the comprehensive land claim agreement entitlement to lands not dealt with under treaty fall in this category.

In my opinion this particular land area is clearly dealt with under treaty 11. Also in my opinion the Government of Canada has fulfilled its obligation under treaty 11 in every way possible. How is this particular land claim justified under that particular area?

Mr. Adams: Madam Speaker, although I have an opinion on the status of treaty 11 and the outcomes which have not appeared from that treaty, in this case I would like to take the question under advisement.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to the legal base that the hon. member laid out. I thank him for placing that on the record. I am sure it will be the subject of consultation and examination.

Would the member give the House a view on the question of the fee simple aspect of this agreement? Does the member concur that fee simple transfer on such a broad basis as is undergone in this agreement goes beyond any legal precedent we have seen in Canada?

Mr. Adams: Madam Speaker, I have to say I am not familiar with all the legal precedents, but it does seem to me that one of the bases of these claims negotiations is that there are groups of people who have variously occupied very large areas. It seems to

me logical that when the settlement is made there is some agreement or jurisdiction over a very large area which reflects the fact that over long periods of time they have occupied those areas in a particular way. There are much tighter agreements over other areas in which, particularly in recent decades, people have lived in a much more non–migratory way.

Therefore it seems to me the fee simple part of these agreements has to do with that. There are rights to wildlife management over large areas and more controlled rights the closer we get to the areas presently occupied by the native people.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member opposite would care to comment on the whole nature or the whole question of precedent. There are some very good things in this settlement and there are some things we are questioning.

While we recognize that these lands are exclusively under federal jurisdiction, I wonder if there is any notion of precedent. We will have further land claim settlements in provincial territory. There are pending land claim settlements in Albert with Metis, for instance. Would the member speak to the issue of precedence?

Mr. Adams: Madam Speaker, unlike many members of the House I am not a lawyer. In using the word precedence as a more general term, this is a precedent. It is an indication of the fact that the government and the people of Canada want to move on many of these settlements.

With regard to precedence in the more technical sense, it relates to the question I answered of the member from the Bloc previously, that when such negotiations are made in provincial jurisdictions provincial governments will be fully involved. To that extent the precedent of involving the NWT government is a very good and a very healthy one. It is very proper to involve provincial governments in their areas of jurisdiction.

(1340)

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C–16.

I have particular interest in the proposed legislation, having lived and worked among the people of this area. Perhaps I have a better understanding of this part of Canada and its people than someone living in suburban Ottawa, Toronto or Edmonton.

As I have repeatedly said, I strongly support the right of Canada's aboriginal peoples to self–determination and self–reliance. Therefore when representatives of the Sahtu Tribal Council first presented the agreement to me I was supportive. There are many elements of this proposal that moved the aboriginal people of the Mackenzie Valley toward the objectives I support. I am referring to the rejection of the objectionable apartheid principles of the reservation system of more southern parts of Canada.

The co–operative approach to resource management and free access to their traditional lands for traditional purposes is positive. The requirement to contribute to the tax system to help support their own government and the preservation of the social safety net system so essential to all Canadians including aboriginals is also a positive step. In my view the taxation provisions of the agreement are very complex and no doubt will be the subject of legal interpretation.

On these points and in the hope the cash payment and the share of the resource revenue would end the devastating cycle of welfare dependency which has robbed these once independent, hardy people of their self–esteem and initiative, unfortunately the closer I examined the agreement the more I came to realize these positive things would never be achieved through the agreement.

More and more I began to question the motivation and objectives of those negotiating on behalf of the people of Canada. When I contacted public affairs of the department of Indian affairs and Northern Development and inquired as to the objectives of this process, I was told it was to right the injustices of the past and to supplement rather than replace the provisions of treaty 11.

Immediately I have to ask what injustices are we trying to right. If one is familiar or cares to study the history of the area north of the 60th parallel, one would discover that there is a substantial difference from the history of more southern neighbours.

To begin with, life for aboriginals in the land north of 60 has traditionally been a subsistence existence, harsh and unforgiving. From the earliest encroachment into this land by European settlement, the federal government has recognized its responsibility to the people living there and made efforts in spite of the vast wilderness and harsh climate to provide, where possible, help through RCMP outposts and local missions.

I will not accept the popular myth spread by certain self–serving interests that the encroachment of European settlers constitutes an injustice against the aboriginal people here or anywhere else in Canada.

At the turn of the century western and northern Canada was a vast, mostly uninhabited land in real danger of being annexed to the United States. The aboriginal people living in this vast territory were eager for the technology which the Europeans brought with them, in spite of the problems that came with them.

It was under these circumstances that the then Government of Canada, through a series of grossly distorted and overly optimistic ads, invited Europeans from all parts of Europe to come to western Canada with the promise of 160 acres or a half square mile of land for the sum of $10 and a freer, richer lifestyle, but

all the time having the real objective of asserting sovereignty over western and northern Canada.

It was under these circumstances that my grandfather along with thousands of others came to Canada, not to perpetrate an injustice upon the aboriginal people but to accept the opportunity being offered.

In spite of the great disappointment upon arriving in a bush covered, swampy, fly and mosquito infested homestead in northern Alberta, my grandfather and grandmother built a home with the trees on the land, cleared the land with only an axe and a team of horses, and built a farm in spite of the injustices of hail, frost, depression, injury, disease and government misrepresentation. That is how to build self–esteem and self–worth.

(1345)

I cannot and will not be held responsible for the actions of the past political leadership of this country any more than the aboriginal people can be held responsible for their past leadership. Therefore I will not accept the guilt or support compensation for my being here or my helping to develop industries which now support us in the best standard of living in the world. However I would support any agreement or effort to help the aboriginal people of this area to participate and enjoy the benefits of life enjoyed by all other Canadians.

I believe this agreement entrenches in the Constitution commitments on the Government of Canada that may not be in the best interest of all Canadians or responsibilities that Canada can no longer afford.

The richness of this package should shock even the most liberal Canadian. The agreement gives $100,000 in financial entitlement over 15 years plus title in fee simple to eight square miles of land per capita counting children, plus a share of resource revenue amounting to somewhere between $200,000 and $400,000 per year.

In my view the settlement would be acceptable if it would then cause to end the financial responsibility of the federal government to these people. The truth is far different. Clause 3.1.5 clearly states that the participants in the agreement shall have full access to all present and future programs for aboriginal people as well as programs available to all other Canadians.

These programs now include not only a share of the $4.5 billion budget of the department of Indian affairs and Northern Development but also a share of the proliferation of government programs for aboriginals provided by at least 29 specific programs in 15 other departments of government, costing at least another $5 billion. All this is being offered at a time when our country is bankrupt and our most treasured social safety net system is decomposing because of the financial restraints being imposed on it.

On top of the aforementioned benefits the agreement also calls for the establishment of no less than nine separate boards funded by federal money and a written commitment to negotiate a self–government agreement with the institution of this government agreement also presumably funded by Ottawa.

This brings me back to a question that I raised earlier. What could possibly be the motivation or justification of such an agreement? In my opinion there have been no great injustices perpetrated on the people of this area above those imposed on all our lives by the advancement of technology and our consuming lifestyle.

The government is already redistributing tax and resource dollars in a major way to help these people catch up. The Canadian government 73 years ago at the request of these aboriginal people entered into treaty No. 11 and has more than met its obligations. In fact the text of treaty No. 11 states: ''The said Indians do hereby cede, release, surrender and yield up to the Government of the Dominion of Canada for His Majesty the King and his successors forever all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever to the lands included within the following limits and also the said Indian rights, titles and privileges whatsoever to all other lands wherever situated in the Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territory or any other portion of the Dominion of Canada''.

Where does this initiative for the land claim settlement come from? In my opinion the initiative comes from the real root of the aboriginal problem in Canada, the insidious parasitic Indian industry. That group of lawyers, consultants, bureaucrats and Indian leaders year after year swallow up the vast majority of money designated to solve the problems of poverty, illiteracy, substance abuse and suffering among our native people.

This agreement does nothing to solve that problem and in fact greatly reinforces it. Instead of continuing to feed this selfish parasitic monster, let us break the cycle by making available to aboriginal Canadians programs available to all Canadians and then providing an affordable amount of the $10 billion plus now spent on aboriginal services and programs to grassroots aboriginal people in the form of a guaranteed annual income.

We will then give the power to tax to the proposed aboriginal governments. These aboriginal governments will then be truly accountable to their people. The people will decide what programs they are willing and able to pay for. They will also decide if their tax dollars should pay for their chief or band administrator to spend in one year $130,000 on travel, as was the case of a band chief in Manitoba, the very birthplace of self–government proposed by the minister of aboriginal affairs. There would still be those selfish, greedy people who would try to exploit these people but at least it would provide a much greater accountability if combined with regular, fair, democratic elections than the system now provides.

(1350)

In conclusion, I would urge hon. members to re–examine the whole agreement and its implications. I ask members to consider what it means, when in spite of the fact that only 73 years ago the Canadian government entered into treaty No. 11 and the fact that this land claim is in clear violation of the terms of this treaty, we are repeatedly reminded that the rights gained by aboriginals through these treaties is a binding contract on Canada forever.

I also ask members to consider whether we have the right to commit future generations of Canadians to this extremely generous package, considering Canada's financial situation and our doubtful ability to maintain our current social safety net system.

Last, I ask members to question the real motivation behind this agreement and who stands to benefit most. Look at the Indian bands in Canada that have accumulated great wealth through resource revenue and it is obvious that money will not solve the problems we are trying to solve. These problems can only be solved by the people regaining their self–esteem and self–worth. We are providing enough wealth that 982 adult aboriginals need never work or strive to meet goals again in their lifetime. However it will not accomplish this any more than it did for others.

I ask that members not buy into this guilt trip so skilfully put on us and not enter into another binding contract based solely on racial origin that is to last as long as the sun rises and the rivers flow.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker,

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut]

Listening to the two members from the Reform Party one would think we were invading and taking over the land they have always occupied.

After listening to what they are saying it seems we are going in as aboriginal people and saying that they should excuse us but we are taking over the land. They never quite point out that the people they are talking about, the Sahtu, whose land claims we are discussing today, have been in that neighbourhood for 36,000 years.

One would think after listening to the previous speaker—I will get to the question—that the aboriginal people were just there to invite the Government of Canada to take over our land and say it is all yours. It was not quite like that. There were losses imposed whether it was renewable wildlife loss, or social loss like custom adoption or mission schools that were imposed on the aboriginal people.

We did not ask for any of that. We did not ask for a lot. Somebody told us that we could not hunt geese in the springtime which we have always done. We could not hunt muskox or whales any more because they were almost extinct because some hunters and whalers came along and hunted all the muskoxen, whales, and whatever else.

The member talked about mosquito infested areas and the hardships that his grandparents went through. We think it is a beautiful land. We do not talk about the mosquitoes infesting the land or cold and hardships. It is our land. We like it. It does not matter whether there are 10 million mosquitoes around. It is a beautiful land. We do not describe it as mosquito infested or cold and harsh.

(1355)

The attitude of people like the member who just spoke and the other Reform member who spoke earlier, I repeat, is unbelievable. We are not asking him to accept the guilt. All we are doing through this legislation is trying to right the wrongs that were done to the aboriginal people of that area, in this case, the Sahtu. Words fail me because it is too unbelievable to even contemplate the attitude of the Reform Party.

I would ask a couple of questions. If we look back far enough, we will find that the lands that were occupied for the last 30,000 years were occupied by the Dene. If the member wants to trace his history in that area, he would go back no more than a couple hundred years, if that far.

Should there not be some justification in settling a claim with the people who have occupied that land and who can trace back their occupation in tens of thousands of years? Second, would he not agree that the right thing to do would be to recognize the aboriginal people's inherent right of self–government and that the aboriginal people deserve to have that recognition?

Mr. Chatters: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the member opposite drew such bizarre conclusions from what he heard myself and the other Reform Party member talk about. The fact is the Canadian government resisted entering into a treaty with the aboriginal people of this area for some time, choosing to leave them live a traditional lifestyle and to not disrupt that way of life.

If one examines the history of the area, one also notes that it was the aboriginal people who on a number of occasions requested that the Canadian government enter into treaty with them. In fact, the leadership of the very communities that we speak of in this agreement put their signatures to treaty No. 11.

Therefore we had the situation where the federal government had no responsibility to the aboriginal people. It was the choice of the aboriginal people themselves. They chose to enter that agreement.

The Speaker: It being two o'clock p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 35, the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

S. O. 31

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, we hear today that Canada's recovery and renewal are based on the new electronic highway. That may be so but we cannot forget that Canada was built by our farmers, by our miners, by our fishermen, by our forestry workers and by our manufacturers mainly in the automobile business.

That is where the majority of jobs were, that is where the majority of jobs are today and that is where the majority of the jobs will be in the future.

This government can assist all of those industries by getting their products to the global market by a fast economical and Canadian transportation system.

Is it not time that we develop a transportation policy for Canada that will change these goals and get all Canadians back to work?

* * *

[*Translation*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, recently we heard that Mary Anne Kirkby accepted the position of director of communications with the Assembly of First Nations.

Although Mrs. Kirkby is to be commended for deciding to work in an area that is so rewarding, where she will be most useful in improving relations between aboriginal people and non–natives, I would like to draw the attention of this House to some problems around this appointment.

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Kirkby's husband is the hon. member of Prince–Albert—Churchill River in this House and chairs the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, which is responsible for voting on government subsidies to the Assembly of First Nations.

To avoid a potential conflict of interest, I think the hon. member of Prince–Albert—Churchill River should step down as chairman of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs.

* * *

[*English*]

IRONMAN CANADA TRIATHLON

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Canada's own Ironman Triathlon takes place every August in the city of Penticton, British Columbia. This year's race is scheduled for the weekend of August 27 and 28.

It is the only sanctioned Ironman race on the North American continent. The competitors compete in a gruelling course which includes swimming, biking and a marathon run. The 1994 race will attract over 1,300 athletes from every corner of the world to the Okanagan valley.

The event is staged almost entirely by volunteers. On race day thousands of volunteers busily man race routes, transition zones, first aid stations and perform a myriad of other tasks. They do their jobs so well that virtually all the world's top triathletes come to compete in this world class event.

I call on all members of this House to recognize Penticton's Ironman Canada Triathlon for its contribution to placing Canada on the international sporting stage.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVER SYSTEM

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): In Canada we have beautiful rivers which are the envy of the whole world. Among them are the Nahanni, the Alsek, the Kicking Horse, the Athabasca, the Churchill, the Mattawa, the Grand, the Jacques Cartier, the St. Croix, the Shelburne and the Main.

In January 1984 in order to protect these rivers and to retain their beauty for future generations, the Canadian heritage river system was formed under the auspices of Parks Canada. This is a national system of protected rivers from sea to sea to sea. It consists of 27 rivers totalling almost 6,000 kilometres. This number will hopefully grow in coming years.

The heritage river program deserves support. Canadians can generate it by writing to Parks Canada and to their federal elected representatives suggesting the names of additional rivers that require protection through this imaginative and unique initiative aimed at enriching our heritage.

* * *

NEW LISKEARD COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Benoît Serré (Timiskaming—French River): The New Liskeard College of Agricultural Technology located in my riding of Timiskaming—French River is a state of the art agricultural learning institute. Unfortunately the Ontario government is bent on closing the college on May 1, 1994.

Over the past few months I have been working with the Coalition for NLCAT and CIDA to secure a block of students from eastern Europe to come and study at the college.

The idea is simple but the benefits are many: Canada would make better use of our foreign aid. The Canadian economy would benefit through all the spinoffs. It would enable foreign students to return to their homeland with the ability to feed their own people.

I want to thank the Minister of Human Resources Development for approving funding for a study into the feasibility of my idea. I call upon the Minister of Foreign Affairs to push forth this project. We have a chance to show the world what Canadians can do. It would be a shame to let this opportunity pass us by.

* * *

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, during a recent public meeting a presentation was made regarding generation *x*, the lost generation, referring to young people between the ages of 20 and 30.

The message was that these young Canadians had done all they could to educate and promote themselves. After four or five years of university or college, graduation day arrives. The reality of visiting the local employment centre then sets in. They are told to check the job boards, check the computer for jobs and are given the telephone number for job lines.

(1405)

This government and this House must continue to put the plight of these well–educated youth at the forefront of every decision. Instead of providing tax incentives for buying furniture, equipment and computers, let us look at tax breaks for hiring people.

Let us invest in humans and make these young people productive again. They are our future.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COPYRIGHT

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau): Mr. Speaker, the Société des auteurs et compositeurs du Québec appeared this morning before the Copyright Board to ask that royalties paid to songwriters whenever their works are performed be raised from 2 per cent to 5 per cent.

After reversing its position on this question, the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada agreed with the Copyright Board on a very scant increase over five years.

We ask the Copyright Board to respond favourably to the request by the *Société*, and perhaps we may recall that in France and Italy, royalty rates are, respectively, 8.8 per cent and 10 per cent, while today in Canada, the rate is 2 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, it is high time that copyright and neighbouring rights were clearly and fully recognized in this country.

* * *

[*English*]

NAFTA ENVIRONMENTAL SECRETARIAT

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, on January 24 in this House the Minister of the Environment said that the site for the NAFTA environmental secretariat would be selected and I quote: ''with no politics involved''.

On Friday the minister changed her tune and admitted that the site of the environmental secretariat was chosen based on political criteria. Also on Friday ministers of the government defended not only the environment secretariat but also the Shawinigan patronage park, not on the basis of economic feasibility but on the basis of politics and patronage.

Perhaps the government can provide a list of the projects that are motivated by economic benefits and a list of those that are motivated by politics and patronage so that we can see which list is longer.

This is not a good government. This is an expedient government, a gutless government.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, the national infrastructure program which was promised by the Liberal Party in the election last fall promises to be a catalyst in the fight against unemployment. At the same time it will provide much needed improvements to our basic facilities and will prepare our towns and cities for a more prosperous future.

In many provinces of Canada, mine included, the municipalities, construction companies and the unemployed are eagerly awaiting the approval of projects so that planning and construction can begin. We must always be mindful of the fact that we live in a country which has a relatively short outdoor construction season. We must, to use an old farm term, make hay while the sun shines.

The infrastructure program which is just one component of the program to make Canada work again will surely give our economy a kickstart.

I am sure all hon. members look forward with great anticipation to the day in the not too distant future when the infrastructure projects are under way in every part of this country.

S. O. 31

IRVING WHALE

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles–de–la–Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, today the hearings on the *Irving Whale* open in Charlottetown.

These hearings could not have happened without the combined efforts of the population of les Iles–de–la–Madeleine and P.E.I., and the Minister of Transport. In addition, I wish to single out my colleague, the hon. member for Malpeque, who played a pivotal role in bringing about today's hearings.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, we will finally eliminate the environmental threat represented by the *Irving Whale*. There is no doubt that the Gagnon–Easter committee played a major role in the decision to refloat that wreck. I want to tell this House that before taking action we consulted the public and listened carefully to the representations made, as is the custom with our government.

In conclusion, I thank the residents of the Magdalen Islands, as well as Prince Edward Island, for supporting the Gagnon–Easter committee in its efforts to solve the *Irving Whale* issue. This should be a lesson for the opposition.

* * *

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Glen McKinnon (Brandon—Souris): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the minister of agriculture for his commitment and resolve to protect the Canada agri–food industry in light of the recent request by the U.S. to renegotiate agricultural products under article XXVIII of the GATT.

(1410)

The minister has assured the country the government will continue to negotiate in good faith but will not support a deal unless it is good for Canada. This means it must be a good deal for grains, food processing and the supply managed sectors.

I am confident although Canada regrets the U.S. intends to attempt to increase its tariffs on barley and wheat, that cooler heads will prevail and a good result for both countries will be reached.

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[*Translation*]

SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever, South Africa will have a non racial election this week, four years after opposition political parties became legal. However, the democratic forces in South Africa are still the target of violent attacks. Bloc Quebecois members deplore the politically related attacks of the last few weeks, including those which took place this morning and the one which occurred yesterday, close to the ANC offices, in Johannesburg.

Members of this House, as well as several other observers from Quebec and Canada, are presently in that country to bring their support and ensure a smooth election process. For the millions of Black voters in South Africa, this is a first opportunity to participate in a democratic election.

I am sure that all members of this House will reiterate their strong support for a free and democratic election in South Africa.

* * *

[*English*]

YOUTH

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, Canadian youth today are faced with the prospect of an unhappy future. They recognize they are going to have to pay off the massive debt that weak governments have left them. Youth unemployment rates are higher than ever. Youth crime statistics are soaring.

Constituents tell me that on an average Friday or Saturday night numbers of young people can be found in the parking lots of my riding of Calgary Southeast partying and sometimes vandalising. There is little fear of being caught. Many know if they are caught the punishment will be easy to handle.

Members from all areas of society, including youth groups, have been calling for the government to make changes to the Young Offenders Act. Does this government have the strength to show Canadian youth it cares about them, that it is willing to make the tough decisions to guarantee their future?

The two big signals this government can send to Canadian youth to show it cares about them are to balance the budget and reform the Young Offenders Act.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, fairness and equity within our tax system are not optional but necessary characteristics which we must strive to achieve. Accordingly, when inequities are identified Canadians should expect prompt attention from their elected representatives.

One such inequity has to do with child care expenses. Under the present income tax law one spouse cannot pay another spouse to provide direct parental care and receive a deduction for the expense. However, in the case of same sex couples who have custody of a child, one can pay the other for child care expenses and deduct the cost on their income tax return. This

effectively provides for income splitting not available to married couples.

In the full spirit of fairness and equity, we should extend the same tax benefit to mothers and fathers as is given to same sex couples. This serious inequity demands prompt attention.

* * *

LOBSTER FISHERY

Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester): Mr. Speaker, the ice is gone from the Northumberland Strait. The lobster traps are neatly lined on every small wharf from Barachois to North Port and the fishermen are ready to begin the lobster season in Nova Scotia.

The fishermen look forward to a good season and have voluntarily agreed to increase the size of the lobster carapace to two and three–quarter inches, that is, a larger lobster. They will toss back the smaller lobster to grow to a more desirable size. What this means is better conservation of the lobster fishery and a long term sustainable lobster fishery.

For many years researchers and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans have recommended the increased carapace size. Now that our fishermen have voluntarily agreed to comply I implore the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to legislate the increased size in lobster carapace to ensure conservation in the lobster fishery.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jag Bhaduria (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville): Mr. Speaker, Canada has an immigration system that is well respected throughout the world. However, mistakes are made by some officials on the application of the law and the result can be devastating.

One example is the application of 89 year old Mrs. Arora, who has been denied a visitors visa to visit Canada. She is the mother of one of my constituents, Paul Arora, whom she wants to visit. She was a landed immigrant in Canada, returned to her home country and now wants to visit her son for a few months.

(1415)

Another example is Miss Matharu's application on behalf of her relatives who want to come to Canada to attend her wedding on May 7. They were refused because of their close ties to the family here.

To classify these examples as deceitful is an unfair assessment and application of the immigration law.

I request assurances from the government that the visa application process for honest applicants be given fair and just treatment.

* * *

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, in June 1975 the following remarks appeared in an MP's report to constituents.

''Very strict regulations governing the sale and possession of handguns and automatic weapons and the prohibition of sawed off guns have not deterred the criminal element from obtaining them for use in the commission of crimes. The standard rifle or shotgun is sometimes used in murder, but a registration card would not save the victim. It would be a mistake to initiate legislation in this area which would impose unnecessary red tape upon law–abiding citizens. All governments are faced with the primary challenge of dealing with the root causes of violence, the disease rather than its symptoms''.

These words were written by the Hon. Otto Lang, a prominent Liberal who actually believed in classic liberalism.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

After referring to the unemployed as beer drinkers, the leader of the government also announced in Toronto that he would proceed with his reform of social programs, in spite of opposition and reticence from the provinces, which he qualified as turf wars, although, except in the case of unemployment insurance, these programs are a provincial responsibility.

In spite of his reputation as a constitutional bulldozer, will the Prime Minister acknowledge that by forcing his reform of social programs on the provinces he is acting irresponsibly, since this strategy will merely lead to sterile confrontations and unnecessary duplication?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I said that, like all governments, this government has a mandate to work on creating jobs, not to indulge in squabbles, constitutional or otherwise, that would adversely affect the economic climate in this country. In fact, in recent months we proved that we were able to conclude agreements with provincial governments. We signed an infrastructure agreement with the Government of Quebec, which is working very well, and also with the

other provincial governments; we managed to deal with the Sainte–Marguerite River project; and we have concluded similar arrangements.

Obviously, we cannot deal with all the problems, especially the more difficult ones, and especially when the Opposition is looking for a bone to pick and keeps trying to talk about the Constitution and jurisdictional matters instead of focussing on job creation. We were elected to create jobs, and that is why we are going to introduce reforms in our own jurisdiction that will create more jobs. We hope the provinces will be willing to do likewise, so that both levels of government will benefit and, above all, so that workers will get what they want: jobs that will provide them with an honest living.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Prime Minister whether he would agree that his government has already started ''bulldozing'' the provinces in the area of social programs, first through the training component of the federal adjustment plan for fishermen, and second, through its youth strategy, in both cases increasing the overlap he denies exists.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Regarding our strategy for the fishermen, the Government of Newfoundland, where 85 per cent of the target population comes from, has praised the reform which was developed in consultation with it and other governments.

As for youth job creation, that is a priority for this government. The federal government has always had such programs. It had them under the Conservative government when the Leader of the Opposition was a member and a minister on the government side. My point is that, today, the hon. member is hardly in a position to blame us for doing what he did himself, and we make no apologies for doing everything we can to create jobs, especially for young people.

(1420)

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister following the callous approach he took in Quebec prior to the forced patriation of 1981, when he refuses to have an open and public discussion of these reforms of social programs with his provincial counterparts, as requested by Mr. Bob Rae of Ontario?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development has had several meetings with his colleagues and was supposed to have another one last Monday. The provincial governments said they were not ready, and the minister postponed the meeting. That is exactly how we want to proceed. At the request of several provinces, the minister cancelled the meeting he was prepared to call at that time. We can hardly do more than talk to the provinces and, if they want us to postpone the talks, we say yes. Eventually, governments will have to agree, because the unemployed cannot wait while we squabble over constitutional matters. They want jobs, and we will do everything to satisfy them in that respect.

* * *

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, on April 13 last, in response to a question from my colleague from Saint–Hyacinthe—Bagot, the Prime Minister stated, and I quote: ''— I am sure that all committee chairs will be very pleased to consider all recommendations for spending cuts and that will make the hon. members very happy. I asked our party to do so, because we want our members to be involved. There is no problem, then''.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a problem. What explanation can the Prime Minister give for the fact that Liberal members have so far disregarded his undertaking and have systematically refused to carry out a comprehensive review of government expenditures, as the Prime Minister had promised?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the committees have work to do and they do the best they can. They have received a mandate from this House and, if the Opposition members want to submit a list of the programs they would like this government to cut, they can do so here, in this House. We will gladly accept it. However, with the Opposition, it is always the same old story when we ask them to identify the programs they would like us to cut. When we proceed to make cuts, they say we are targeting the wrong program. But they never let us know where they want the cuts to be made. When they themselves know, perhaps then they will tell us. Why all the fuss? Send me a letter! Deliver it to me here, in the House. What could be simpler!

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to write a letter to the Prime Minister. I will send him as many letters as he wants, if that is what it takes. However, I was under the impression that he had made a commitment in this House that the committees would, on his orders, proceed to review government spending as requested. Is the Prime Minister leading his members? Does he have any leadership? Can he give us some assurance that his own members will do what he said? After all, he was the one who gave us his word.

[*English*]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): It is very difficult, Mr. Speaker, to satisfy the opposition. When I decide to do something it blames me because I am moving too fast.

In this case I respect the good judgment of members of Parliament who have been elected and who work hard in their committee duties. They know that we cannot look at everything at the same time. But when we look at something the opposition wants to look at something else.

I will let my members decide. I know they have good judgment and I know that they are not afraid to look at all the expenditures of the government. They are like me, if they can give some good direction to the government about cuts they will be happy with that. At the same time they know they have to respect the rules of the committee. If the members opposite are never satisfied it will be very difficult to satisfy them. They have to be there and give the list that they have prepared, apparently, but which they never made public.

* * *

(1425)

PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

This government was elected on a promise of jobs and infrastructure. Pearson airport is arguably the single most important piece of infrastructure in Canada and a huge creator of jobs.

All five regional chairpersons in the metro area agree that future growth and jobs are at risk. The review on Pearson by Mr. Robert Nixon recommended the same thing, that immediate construction begin.

Can the minister explain why he continues to ignore local leaders and the Nixon report by delaying action on this important project?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my hon. friend that I am not disregarding the advice from important political leaders in the greater metropolitan Toronto area.

I have met with the chairman of metro Toronto, Alan Tonks, with the mayor of Toronto and with the minister of transport for Ontario. We are carefully considering the future of Pearson airport because, as my hon. friend says, it is an important economic development tool for all of Canada, not just southeastern Ontario.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, surely the minister must realize that Pearson expansion is not a local issue. In an earlier question he indicated it was being held up by some Toronto MPs.

It is an issue of national importance. National development and jobs across Canada are at stake. Perhaps the real question here is why has the minister abrogated his national responsibilities regarding Pearson? Why has he passed the matter off to a select group of Toronto members who will clearly have local rather than national interests at heart?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect I do not consider it the role of the minister to abrogate the responsibilities of members of Parliament from any region of the country to determine how they wish to analyse a matter of great interest to them.

I do want to assure my hon. friend that we are looking at the situation at Pearson very closely. We are working very hard at trying to resolve it, but we are respecting our national obligations in making sure that the solution proposed for Pearson International Airport is consistent with what we will be setting in place to operate other airports across the country in the national airport system.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, this project benefits all of Canada for economic and safety reasons. Pearson has been studied to death. When will this government take action on Pearson's job creating potential? Thousands are waiting.

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, there is no question, as the hon. member puts it. Pearson International Airport is a very important airport for Toronto, for Ontario and for all of Canada.

As I have indicated many times both in this place and outside the House, we will be moving expeditiously to do the right thing at Pearson in consultation with a wide spectrum of interested parties. We will make that decision known very soon.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HIBERNIA PROJECT

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, we learned last week that the Hibernia project will run $1 billion over budget. This megaproject, the profitability of which is unsure, has become a real money pit into which Ottawa blindly continues to pump Canadian taxpayers' money by the millions.

My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. How can the government continue to pump more and more public money into this project without knowing how large the cost overrun will be and how far this huge farce will go?

[*English*]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, let me thank my hon. friend for his question.

Let me say as was stated last week in the House that estimates of cost overruns are at a preliminary stage at this point. The owners, including the government, have requested a report which will outline the exact nature of expected cost overruns.

At that point the owners will be doing everything in their power to ensure that whatever cost effective measures can be taken will be taken.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, that was not an answer. It was a skating exercise, and I must say the minister skates very poorly. Unlike Patrick Roy, she must be suffering from a very acute case of appendicitis.

How can her government justify wasting the hundreds of millions of dollars she just referred to—but she does not know exactly how much yet—when this government is about to make cuts across the board in our social programs?

(1430)

[*English*]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources): Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that with a project of this size cost overruns are to be expected.

We are doing that which any responsible owner would do in conjunction with other owners to get a handle on the exact amount of cost overruns. Once we know that we will take whatever steps we can to ensure cost efficiency.

Let me assure the House that the responsibility of the Government of Canada as equity owner—we own 8.5 per cent of the project—for cost overruns will be limited to that 8.5 per cent.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. It concerns remarks made in the House by the Minister of the Environment on January 24.

At that time she said with regard to the selection of a site for the environmental secretariat of NAFTA:

> The selection will be made based on the environmental performance of those cities.

She also said:

> The selection would be made with no politics involved.

On Friday the same minister told the House that the reality was that politics was about making difficult decisions in the best interest of the country.

Since the independent consultant's report was submitted on one day and the decision to award the secretariat to Montreal was made the very next day, what actual criteria came into play? Was it environmental? Was it political? Or, was it federal pork barrelling?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if I recall, the report was not translated until the Monday but a copy in English had been available before. There was a minimum of five cities that qualified. Every one of the cities had some advantages or disadvantages and the minister recommended the city of Montreal.

We cannot go everywhere. I do not know why people make such a fuss about it. One factor that was not in the criteria but always impressed me a lot was that of the five cities Montreal was the one with the highest unemployment level. That was not one of the criteria. There were five cities that were basically equal. Eventually we had to decide. The minister made that recommendation and we accepted it.

We could have decided in November to name one city. We gave the opportunity to a lot of cities to make application but we could select only one. Montreal was selected based on the criteria of cities that were equal. For me, anyway, the fact that Montreal had the highest level of unemployment was an important factor.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Mr. Speaker, the reason many people are making such a fuss over this is that many Canadians feel they were led down the garden path in the selection criteria for this environmental secretariat. Had the decision been made to award it either to Montreal or Toronto and that had been done up front, it would not have been a problem.

In any event, the Deputy Prime Minister also told the House on January 24: ''Montrealers like all Canadians want a process free of politics which is precisely what the federal government is providing''.

This is why my question is so important. When will the government stop insulting Quebecers by offering such transparent bribes when what Montrealers, like all Canadians, really want and expect from the government is a government free of political expediency and a government that would put principle ahead of politics?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is an accusation that has no grounds. If we had selected Edmonton it probably would have been unfair to Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal. However there was a problem with Edmonton in that air connections were not the best. It was negative. We had to decide the month before; we had to select. We had to decide if we were to cut Edmonton or Calgary.

It was decided that it was unfortunately better, probably because you never said thank you, not to cut in Edmonton and cut more in Calgary. It was not pleasant. Why did you not complain at that time and say that we should have cut in Edmonton—

(1435)

The Speaker: Order, please. I would remind all hon. members to address the Chair.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Last Friday, the CBC reported rather disturbing conduct on the part of immigration officers. For example, some of them were said to have administered a sedative to a pregnant woman before deporting her to Zaire. Also, a two–year old child with pneumonia was apparently deported to Ghana. Such practices are unacceptable and unfitting of a civilized nation such as ours.

Is the minister of immigration aware of these allegations and does he condone practices which, insofar as the Zairian woman was treated, are inhuman as well as medically unethical?

[*English*]

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising a very sensitive question. This gives me an opportunity to address it based on the facts.

First, it is general policy of this government, as it was in previous governments, that people on medication who are asked to be removed should continue to receive the prescription through a regular practitioner.

Second, under no circumstances is it policy for the purpose of removal to simply sedate individuals.

Third, last year there were approximately 9,000 removals. My department informed me this morning there were under 12 individuals who required medical attention.

In the case of the woman from Zaire I caution the member because no immigration officials are permitted to administer any kind of medicine whatsoever. In this case the woman had a medical condition which I am not permitted to get into because of privacy laws. There was medical attention recommended and administered by a practising physician under provincial jurisdiction.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec): Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us if he has intervened to rectify this unacceptable situation and condemn the behaviour of immigration officers who inflict physical abuse to foreign nationals being deported or expelled?

[*English*]

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I said very clearly and as completely as I could under the guise of question period that no immigration official is permitted to administer any medicine, injection or sedation at all.

The 12 cases last year out of 9,000 were done on the orders of doctors usually practising in the provincial field for the benefit of the individual who was being asked to be removed because of his or her condition.

I will certainly make every effort to ensure that the policy be observed and respected from one coast of this country to the other.

THEME PARK

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The government is planning to spend 4.5 million taxpayer dollars on a patronage theme park in the Prime Minister's home riding in spite of a report commissioned by the government warning that the project was doomed to fail.

According to the Deputy Prime Minister the government reduced its contribution to the park by more than half because of the concerns raised in the Legault report.

If the government was concerned enough to cut funding to this patronage park in half because it will fail, why did the government not do the logical thing and cut the funding altogether?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is a project that has been in the mill for many years. A lot of people have worked on it. The request at the beginning was bigger and it was reduced.

When the private sector put up $12 million and the provincial government $4 million, the federal government put up $4 million. Even if it had been an infrastructure program, according to the criteria it would have been one–third. This is only 20 per cent.

It was approved by the provincial government and it was in the mill. When I was in the opposition I asked some questions about it. Eventually when I became the Prime Minister the contribution was cut in half. I will not talk too much because the people in Shawinigan wil be mad at me.

(1440)

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, it seems the Prime Minister is telling taxpayers that instead of wasting all their money he will only waste half their money.

According to the February 15 edition of the *Globe and Mail* during the election campaign the Prime Minister promised to fork out the pork in his riding. He said:

> I have the impression that when files from Saint–Maurice cross the desk of a minister—I needn't say more.

Will the Prime Minister rise above patronage politics and tell his ministers not to give preferential treatment to his own riding?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I just said that I do not have to talk to anybody. They will look at all the projects.

When the minister responsible cut my program by half I did not even protest. Maybe I should have. When the private sector provides $12 million to a project, is it willing to lose $12 million? I do not think so.

I think they have looked into it. The site was the first hydroelectric project in North America. It was the first aluminium project in America. Rather than celebrating in our country only wars of the past, it is good to celebrate some of the firsts in North America. If it happens to be in Shawinigan I think I have no choice but to support it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Laurent Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. I would especially want to draw his attention to the anxiety now felt by Canadian farmers.

We know that last week, the U.S. government warned GATT of its intention to restrict Canadian durum wheat and barley imports starting July 1. If no agreement is reached, the conflict could well extend to other agricultural products such as milk and poultry.

Given the importance of these products for the Canadian market and a statement made by the Minister for International Trade on the possibility of Canadian retaliation, can the Prime Minister tell us how Canada intends to protect the interests of Canadian producers and consumers?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, when the GATT agreement was signed, we said that the move towards tariffs was inevitable, but that very high tariffs would be protected by GATT, and our position has not changed.

We do not want it to be attacked, and our legal advisers tell us that there is no danger. The GATT rules will apply in the coming years, even if the Americans do not like it.

Mr. Laurent Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): I would like to ask a supplementary question. The Minister of Foreign Affairs said in February that he hoped Canada's conciliatory attitude would help resolve the trade problems with the United States.

Does the Prime Minister not agree that this new attack confirms the failure of negotiating strategies between Canada and the U.S.?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, since 80 per cent of our trade is with the U.S., it is not surprising that we encounter a few problems from time to time.

As for milk and the products controlled by marketing boards, we think our position is well protected by GATT.

Regarding the situation of Western farmers, our fight is not over yet—

[*English*]

They have 90 days. I talked to the President of the United States on Friday before he made his announcement to tell him that we were not happy with that and that the problem had to be revisited. He told me that over the period of 90 days there would be some time to discuss with the administration. I hope we will come to a reasonable level of export to the United States.

We are doing our best, but the problems in relation to the size of our trade with the United States are not very numerous at this time.

* * *

(1445)

CANADA CUSTOMS

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle): Mr. Speaker, an Ottawa *Sun* article of April 21 states that although 350 new full–time customs staff members were promised for the government's anti–smuggling initiative, only one person has been hired.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of National Revenue inform the House if this is in fact the situation?

Ms. Susan Whelan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to inform the hon. member that the statement quoted in the *Sun* has no basis in fact.

Everything that was promised in the anti–smuggling initiative is now fully operational. Numerous part–time officers have become full–time officers. Furthermore we have hired 30 new full–time officers as of April 13. Our 25 per cent increase in enforcement is a fact.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

I brought to the attention of the House the fact that Canada does not require HIV testing of its applicants for immigration. The minister accused me of having faulty research but then amazingly proceeded to admit that Canada does not screen its immigrants for HIV.

This is double–talk. There is some question of exactly how many immigrants have come to Canada who are infected with HIV. Why test for communicable, infectious diseases like syphilis, hepatitis B, tuberculosis but not for HIV?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, when he asked me that question he said he was amazed to have discovered at committee the day before that we did not automatically test.

When I said he had faulty research it was in the sense that he had not known that to be the case as opposed to being amazed and surprised.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Marchi: You can hem and haw all you want. You can look at truth right in the face.

Then I went on to say that as part of the review in immigration there is a review of the class of medical inadmissibility. I mentioned that it is appropriate for the department and for the country to consider that things do evolve. As the member mentioned there are a number of diseases that we automatically check.

I also mentioned that where our doctors, our practitioners, see evidence of HIV positive they are permitted clearly on their judgment to test and subsequently refuse people admittance.

The question that I raise which will be part of the review is ought this test to be an automatic part of the medical check, yes or no. We are happy to look into that question and no one is hiding anything.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the minister.

As he pointed out a week ago last Friday the minister stated that mandatory testing does not take place but if individuals exhibit traces of HIV they are asked to be tested and if HIV is found then most of these individuals are not permitted into the country.

How can the minister possibly know that most HIV positive immigrants do not get into Canada when his department does not even do the test? Just what is the situation here? How many immigrants are refused?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, what I mentioned was that if our doctors currently detect symptoms of HIV, they order a test. The test is based on two questions, one in terms of public health, safety to the country and, second, the whole question of the tax that the disease would put on the medical infrastructure. The judgment of the doctor is then rendered.

I said then and I repeat today that based on the tests done, our doctors currently reject most of those individuals from coming into the country, not based on general public safety but on the whole question of how taxing the disease would be on the medical infrastructure.

I have also said that we are reviewing this situation so as to update ourselves with respect to HIV and AIDS. These diseases are a growing concern that has consumed the attention of many individuals. Third, in terms of tracking the number of cases across the country I do not think my department or any department keeps those kinds of numbers.

(1450)

[*Translation*]

ELECTRONIC HIGHWAY

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry. The federal government is getting ready to set up an agency called Access Canada to define a national strategy for the electronic highway. The federal government will control 50 per cent of this agency and the other half will be held by the private sector.

Given the major impact that the electronic highway will have on the whole cultural community, how can the minister justify the lack of representatives from this community on the committee that will define the government's strategy for the electronic highway? Has the government not learned a lesson from the Ginn Publishing affair?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that we finally have a question on the electronic highway. On the advisory committee set up a week ago are people who will inform us about all aspects of the electronic highway.

[*English*]

We have representatives from all regions of the country. We have representatives from all of the different types of users as well as those who will be designing and providing material for the eventual construction of the information highway.

I am looking forward to the work that this committee will do and the assistance it will provide the government in building the regulatory and policy framework in which the electronic highway will operate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi): Mr. Speaker, this did not confirm the exclusion of the cultural community from the strategy.

How can the government think of defining a national strategy for the electronic highway without directly involving the provinces in Access Canada?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): As I just said, Mr. Speaker, we have representatives from all regions and also from all provinces of Canada. This committee has members who deal with cultural issues every day.

[*English*]

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, there are precious few moments in this House when the government's answers to questions are complete, specific and focused.

Having said that, my question is for the Minister of Health. Breast cancer has reached epidemic proportions in our country. Currently there are two cases of fraudulent breast cancer research. There are ongoing allegations of improprieties in the medical auditing process and the American medical community has withheld information for three years that was important to Canadian research.

Will the Minister of Health tell the House how the Department of Health will guarantee the integrity of breast cancer research in Canada.

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, first of all, breast cancer has reached epidemic proportions and it has been that way for many years. It is not recent. It concerns me very much that more has not been done for women with breast cancer in terms of research and the outcome of treatment.

In the cases the hon. member is referring to, American dollars went to fund those studies in Canada. The Canadian government did not fund those particular research studies.

(1455)

As a result of what happened with these cases, I met with the Medical Research Council to assure myself and to speak with them to make sure that we always address these cases as completely and as effectively as possible.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the minister's response but it was not specific to my question. I have a supplementary question.

I would like to know what progress has been made in the investigation that the minister committed to on March 17 regarding those fraudulent cases of breast cancer treatments in Montreal. Could she be specific to that question.

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, specific to that question I answered that this was an American study.

Let me reassure hon. members and all Canadians that even though these studies were not the way they should have been, many other studies have validated the findings. They have been tested and their validity has been looked at, as have all the other problems that have been encountered with the one case in Montreal.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

Two weeks ago it came to light that the RCMP were not only spying on black civil rights leaders in Nova Scotia in the 1960s and 1970s, including one Wayne Adams who today is a minister of the provincial crown, but that internal reports of the RCMP were laced with racially insensitive and overtly racist comments about blacks.

Last Thursday before a House of Commons standing committee, RCMP commissioner Norm Inkster was given an opportunity to apologize for these statements but refused. Given the seriousness of these incidents, what actions is he contemplating to address these very disturbing incidents?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I certainly understand the hon. member's concern about this troubling matter.

I looked at the committee transcript. I note that at the committee, Commissioner Inkster did say that ''we all regret what occurred''. He also said he would take the matter ''under consideration''.

In view of the concerns expressed today in the question by the hon. member and which were also expressed to me by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, I will be speaking further to the commissioner about it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. On April 21, the Minister of Health confirmed in this House that the anti–smoking media campaign to inform and educate the public, particularly young people, about the risks linked to tobacco use, was a flop. The minister also said, and I quote: ''I must say that I have indeed inherited the ad campaign —launched by the previous government''.

How can the minister put the blame on the previous government, since she is the one who, last February 8, decided to waste an extra $3 million on a campaign which never gave any result?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, first I want to say that the ad campaign was effective when it was first implemented. But it is now time to change that campaign. We know how we must spend our money. We are working with the provinces and the anti–smoking groups to ensure that the next campaign will focus on the current problems and on young people, because they are the ones we want to convince to stop smoking or to avoid developing that habit.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Health: Why change the campaign if it is effective? What guarantee does the minister have that she will not once again waste millions of dollars in a California–type of campaign? What guarantee can she give us?

[*English*]

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, any campaign that will convince anyone to give up smoking or not to start in the first place is a terrific campaign.

(1500)

The hon. member mentions the California campaign. That campaign has been particularly effective in discouraging people from smoking. I want to assure the hon. member that any campaign we embark upon will be extremely well focused, well targeted to ensure that we get every bang that we can for our buck.

* * *

DRINKING WATER

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, my question is inspired by my constituents and is for the Minister of Health.

Many Canadians are purchasing bottled water or using purification systems on their chlorine treated drinking water supply and there are continued health warnings against the use of chlorine or chloramine.

Is the minister aware of the reported health risks involved with the continued use of chlorine and chloramine?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, yes, I am aware.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Health but in view of the seriousness of this potential threat I would like it to be taken seriously. It is a serious threat to the health of Canadians resulting in increased cost to our health care system.

Will the minister launch a public investigation into the continued use of chlorine and chloramine in our drinking water in Canada?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned with this issue. I have been on top of this issue now for a number of months. I have asked officials in my department to bring forward recommendations so that we can do something as quickly as possible.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Fernand Robichaud (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Government's response to petitions.

* * *

[*English*]

MIGRATORY BIRDS CONVENTION ACT, 1994

Hon. Diane Marleau (for the Minister of the Environment) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–23, an act to implement a convention for the protection of migratory birds in Canada and the United States.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

* * *

(1505)

[*Translation*]

CANADA WILDLIFE ACT

Hon. Diane Marleau (for the Minister of the Environment) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–24, An Act to amend the Canada Wildlife Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

LIBRARY BOOK POSTAL SUBSIDY

Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am presenting a petition signed by 1,486 people in the constituency of Souris—Moose Mountain.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan and the users of Saskatchewan's public libraries, draw to the attention of the House the following: That the library book postal subsidy is necessary for the continued operation of inter–lending services among libraries and plays a vital role in the distribution of cultural materials; that the cancellation of the subsidy or changes in the amount of the subsidy would result in severely hampering the public's access to information housed in

the libraries outside of residents' immediate area; and that maintaining the subsidy is a more efficient use of public funds than any other alternative.

Therefore, your petitioners call upon Parliament to continue the library book postal subsidy and to ensure that there will be no further erosion of the resulting library book postal rate.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Hon. Fernand Robichaud (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Shall all questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SAHTU DENE AND METIS LAND CLAIM SETTLEMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C–16, an act to approve, give effect to and declare valid an agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada and the Dene of Colville Lake, Déline, Fort Good Hope and Fort Norman and the Metis of Fort Good Hope, Fort Norman and Norman Wells, as represented by the Sahtu Tribal Council, and to make related amendments to another act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): As I understand it there are still a few minutes left for questions and answers for the hon. member for Athabasca. The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River.

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House on Bill C–16, the Sahtu Dene and Metis Land Claim Settlement Act.

The government is committed to the conclusion of equitable land claim settlements with the aboriginal peoples. Since taking office we have made great strides in streamlining the process of settling claims. The negotiation of comprehensive land claims is a result of a policy introduced by the Liberal government in 1973 as a response to views expressed by representatives of the aboriginal peoples and in recognition of the Calder decision handed down by the Supreme Court of Canada.

(1510)

The intent of this government is to achieve through negotiations appropriate and formal changes to the structure of the relationships between First Nations and the federal and provincial governments. The objective of a comprehensive claims settlement is to exchange undefined aboriginal rights for defined rights with constitutional protection. The resulting certainty benefits all.

A number of achievements, especially recent accomplishments, demonstrate the success of the comprehensive claims negotiation process. To date 10 comprehensive land claims have been settled and 11 claims are being negotiated. As well, the British Columbia Treaty Commission has received statements of intent to negotiate from 44 First Nations and aboriginal organizations.

The James Bay and northern Quebec agreement and the northeastern Quebec agreement represent Canada's first modern treaties. They were signed in 1975 and 1978 respectively. The two agreements are very similar. The Inuvialuit agreement, signed in 1984, sets out the rights and benefits of the 2,500 Inuvialuit of the western Arctic. The next agreements concluded with the Gwich'in in 1992 and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut in 1993 contained many provisions similar to the Inuvialuit final agreement. They also include additional items such as resource revenue sharing.

In April 1990 negotiators for the Dene and Metis, Canada and the Northwest Territories initialled a final agreement for that group's overall claim. However, in July 1990 a motion of the joint Dene and Metis assembly called for the renegotiation of fundamental elements of the initial agreement, effectively rejecting the agreement as negotiated.

The legislation before the House is the result of intensive negotiations over several years which led to regional claims agreements with the Dene Metis. They are based on the April 1990 agreement. The Gwich'in of the Mackenzie Delta region were the first Dene and Metis group to negotiate a regional comprehensive claim. The Sahtu Dene and the Metis agreement is the next regional claim settlement to be concluded. The restoration of a land and resource base to sustain this aboriginal society is key to the cultural and economic viability of the communities concerned.

This government remains committed to the negotiation of comprehensive land claims settlements. As a step to fulfil our commitment to other aboriginal people without standing claims, we announced on December 20, 1993 that the Government of Canada would return immediately to the claims negotiations table with the Labrador Inuit Association without any preconditions.

As a parallel commitment to support regional self–government agreements, our government mandated the conduct of Labrador Inuit self–government negotiations concurrently with the comprehensive land claim negotiations. We are looking forward to receiving a proposal from the Labrador Inuit over the

next few weeks and we expect that tripartite discussions on that proposal, which will include the government of Newfoundland and Labrador, will begin very soon. I am optimistic that we will reach an agreement with the Labrador Inuit within a reasonable time.

Similar progress is being made with other aboriginal claimant groups. As members are aware, offshore water is the primary source of Inuit subsistence activities. This is no different for the Inuit of northern Quebec. The 1975 James Bay and northern Quebec agreement dealt with aboriginal rights to lands in the province of Quebec only. It did not address Quebec Inuit claims to islands offshore Quebec which are in the jurisdiction of the Northwest Territories and the northeast coast of Labrador.

(1515)

Negotiations began in 1992 and already a framework agreement which is the first step to these negotiations has been signed by Canada, the Northwest Territories and the Quebec Inuit.

All of us have been aware of the government's various initiatives to improve the social and economic circumstances of the Innu nation in Davis Inlet in Labrador. Concurrent with these initiatives we are also negotiating the Innu nation land claim.

Negotiations toward a framework agreement began in July 1991. Substantial progress has been realized in those negotiations. There has been equally encouraging progress on the potential interim measures related to the environmental impacts of proposed development projects.

We expect the discussions which are tripartite in nature and involve participation of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will result in a settlement with the Labrador Inuit and the Innu nation to provide a land and resource base, one which will promote regional development and self–sufficiency in those communities.

The government also intends to introduce settlement legislation for the Council of Yukon Indians over the next few weeks. This will complete a lengthy negotiation process, one which was begun some 20 years ago.

Negotiators for the Government of Canada, the Yukon government and the Council for Yukon Indians signed an umbrella final agreement in 1993. It establishes the basis for the negotiation of individual settlements with each of the 14 Yukon First Nations. Final land claims agreements and self–government agreements have been signed with four Yukon First Nations. Settlement and self–government legislation for these agreements will be introduced soon.

One may well ask why all of these land claims agreements are so important. The answer is both elementary and profound. These agreements are the basis on which we can provide land and resources to aboriginal people along with guaranteed participation in land and resource management in a way that provides for them their rightful place in Canadian society.

These modern treaties are the means for guaranteed participation of aboriginal peoples in effective governing structures dealing with renewable resources, land use planning, environmental impact assessment and review, and land and water regulation. In addition they provide the financial means to allow aboriginal people to develop an economic base which will sustain their futures.

It is only by clearing away the uncertainty over title to the land that we are able to assure equitable access to the development over land and resources. This becomes critical in negotiating claims south of the 60th parallel, claims which we are undertaking.

In addition to finalizing the claims in the north and beginning negotiations in Labrador we are negotiating along with the government of Quebec, the Conseil des Atikamekw et des Montagnais, CAM, claim in Quebec.

Recently the Quebec government reappointed its negotiators in another effort to accelerate the negotiations. General side tables have been established to negotiate matters such as lands and traditional activities, self–government and economic development. The parties are aiming to complete the agreement in principle by June 1995.

Negotiations with the Nisga'a are also under way in the province of British Columbia. We have approached the numerous land claims in British Columbia through a unique process.

The governments of Canada and British Columbia and representatives of First Nations have established a treaty commission to facilitate and monitor negotiations, allocate negotiation funding, and assist in dispute resolution. A further function of the commission is to make public the reports on the progress of the negotiations.

(1520)

The British Columbia Treaty Commission is an impartial arm's length body designed to facilitate negotiations. Commissioners are appointed by the governments of Canada and British Columbia and by the British Columbia Summit of First Nations.

We intend that the negotiations in the province will include both comprehensive claims and self–government matters in a combined process. This will help to establish appropriate linkages between claims, structures and self–government institutions in various jurisdictional areas.

Given the importance of land and resource development in British Columbia, a joint third party consultation process has been established to address the interests of the third parties.

I have sketched for hon. members the very promising situation surrounding the comprehensive claims process in Canada today. I am proud to be able to urge them to consider favourably the Sahtu Dene and Metis land claims settlement which is before them.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my first question relates to the B.C. Treaty Commission which was referred to as an impartial body. Three groups are involved in those negotiations, represented by the federal and provincial governments and the First Nations.

My first question is why are third party interests and most especially the municipality or local governments that are elected and influenced by local negotiations not represented in that so–called impartial treaty commission?

My second question relates to the whole question of fee simple land transfer. Is the hon. member familiar with the recent B.C. Court of Appeal decision on the Gitksan–Wet'suwet'en case? Does the member concur that the fee simple transfer this bill talks about goes far beyond any legal precedence as expressed very well in that B.C. Court of Appeal decision?

Mrs. Cowling: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his questions. I know hon. members on the other side of the House really like the colour red just as I do. I would like to quote a portion of the red book which I carried with me in October: ''The priority of a Liberal government will be to assist aboriginal communities in their efforts to address the obstacles to their development and to help them marshal the human and physical resources necessary to build and sustain vibrant communities''.

The hon. member has asked a question which I will take under advisement and my answer to his second question is no.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her speech. I would like her to comment on a few observations I have.

The original treaty signed by the treaty Indian people with the agents of the crown were in part land settlements. They have never worked out, not that they could not have because in some areas there has been an enormous amount of wealth generated from Indian lands.

The reason they have not worked out is because of the power and control the department of Indian affairs has over the Indian people. They cannot sell their grain without approval from the superintendent of the department of Indian affairs and so on. It is all there in the history of the treaties and the treaty research many of the bands have conducted.

(1525)

Our party is supportive of the fair, equitable and rapid settlement of these land claims so that the aboriginal people can form a base upon which they can become economically independent.

My concern about this agreement is that we are creating another bureaucracy. It seems to be a fairly formidable one according to what I have read.

Does the hon. member see the economic viability of this agreement? In other words, will we see a time when the people of Canada will no longer have to provide support through the various programs for this particular group of Indian people? I think there would be a lot of support from the people of Canada if that is the case, if that is what we can see within this agreement.

Mrs. Cowling: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the hon. member's first question, one of the reasons they never did work is because they were never honoured. They were left out in limbo.

I am very optimistic about this process we are doing today. I want to quote some information for the hon. member. The agreement guarantees the participation of the Sahtu Dene and Metis. They will be able to manage their own renewable resources within their settlement area; land use planning within the settlement area; environmental impact assessment and review within the Mackenzie Valley; and regulation of land and water use within the settlement area.

I believe this is the road to take for the dismantling of Indian affairs. This is the road to take to initiate self–government.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I have one more question.

There was some discussion about the history of these kinds of negotiations in the member's statement. I just wondered whether the member was familiar with the comprehensive western Arctic Dene–Metis agreement. It was signed in 1990 and included a larger settlement area, but it included this specific area within it. Would the hon. member comment as to why the fee simple transfer of ownership in that period of time to this group of people has approximately doubled in size since 1990?

Mrs. Cowling: Mr. Speaker, in 1990 there was some disagreement between the Sahtu and the Metis. Why we are here today is so that they can take on their own initiatives and their own mandate, so that they can do this themselves.

I encourage hon. members across the way to support us in this venture. I believe we must work together on this venture.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I am going to give the member for Dauphin—Swan River a break.

I wonder if she might not agree that the degree of compensation seems to be setting a very high precedent in terms of what the compensation level is.

(1530)

Mrs. Cowling: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member did not hear what I had said earlier. I would hope that we could be very positive and take a look at the positive side of this matter.

I am going to mention again that the agreement guarantees the participation of the Sahtu Dene and the Metis. They can control their own destiny. They can be managers of their own resources, land use planning, environmental impact assessment and review within the Mackenzie Valley, and regulation of land and water use within that settlement area.

I encourage hon. members on the other side of the House to accept our philosophy. Let us get on with self–government. Let us allow the aboriginal peoples of the country to have some dignity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity this afternoon to speak in the debate on second reading of the bill tabled by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the purpose of which is to approve, give effect and declare valid the agreement signed on September 6, 1993, with the Dene and the Metis. This agreement was concluded following land claims made by these peoples, which must be considered by this House in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution Act, 1982.

I am the elected representative for the riding of Châteauguay and, as such, I am particularly aware of and concerned by all matters connected with aboriginal affairs. The riding provides a good example of the Amerindian problem or, should I say, the problem of co–habitation between our peoples. The facts are clear: sharing the lands of this continent first meant living with them, then it meant hostility, then pushing some into the back country and then creating reserves after a conquest in which they lost everything. We cannot deny and we cannot get around this historical truth, since we are faced with it every day. The proud descendants of these peoples are only too willing to remind us, each in their own way, of the cost of being neighbours on such a fragile basis.

The most troubling challenge to us today is to find the right way to deal with the problems we have created. There is the silence of the young suicide victims in Davis Inlet. This is our own third world, within our borders, the result of wanting to share this land without respecting the aboriginal culture and way of life.

The most troubling image is that of this anonymous Algonquin in the subway, crowded all sides by the ultimate cultural mosaic, and no one else realizes that his ancestors were there first. Another troubling image: two faces staring impassively at each other, their silence an eloquent metaphor. With the reserve of Khanawake within its boundaries, Châteauguay knows all about that, and that is why it placed its trust in the Bloc Quebecois.

The Bloc Quebecois recognizes aboriginal peoples as distinct nations, as it recognizes the two founding peoples of this Canadian federation. Mutual understanding will depend on our ability to share the same sphere of economic, political, legal and commercial activities, as opposed to the present situation, where we live in parallel worlds.

(1535)

This partnership must succeed and, with them like with the people of Quebec, the best way to achieve mutual co–operation is by recognizing first of all their existence as partners, as neighbours, in their integrity, with all their rights and obligations. The days when one nation exercised trusteeship over another should be over.

In that context, the Bloc Quebecois welcomes Bill C–16 as a form of recognition of the Sahtu Dene and Metis as nations. Major exclusive territorial rights are being recognized to a group of 2,000 people living on 41,437 squre kilometres in the Mackenzie Valley, in the Northwest Territories, including subsurface rights on an area covering 1,813 square kilometres, some $75 million over 15 years and an annual share of the royalties on the valley's natural resources.

Sahtu lands will be neither public property nor reserves. Trough this agreement, the Dene and the Metis are guaranteed private lands, which will enable them to be involved in land use planning, protect their exclusive hunting rights, and determine their economic development prospects as well as their future.

This is one more step toward self–government. That is exactly what we are wishing for all peoples: the capacity to take in their hands and have a say with regard to the management of their natural resources, heritage conservation and regulations concerning their lands and waters.

One point of particular interest to me is the impact of this agreement on the land holding system. Since the Colonial era, we had known two main types of property: private property and public property. The former was a vested right of lords, settlers and inhabitants, and today, it is a privilege enjoyed by citizens, corporations and speculators alike. The latter was a prerogative of the Crown, the clergy, the Colonial administration, and today, the state, our governments.

The mid–19th century saw another type of property be established, namely Indian reserves. It was then, and still is, a special status granted to lands, a status nonetheless ambiguous. We are dealing here with collectively owned lands which are neither public, since they are not accessible to everyone, nor private, since they are not controlled by individuals, but rather by a tribal council which is responsible for administering the reserve.

I have some difficulty understanding why, in 1994, we have yet to clear up this ambiguity. I think back to a time full of promise when, in 1969, the government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau promised action to bring about the full participation of native communities. Even then, the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, today the honourable the Prime Minister, said that the legislative and constitutional basis of discrimination must be removed. The government of the day was adamant that services must come through the same channels and from the same government agencies for all Canadians. The lawful obligations of natives must be recognized and, to this end, responsibility for administering native lands must be transferred to native communities.

Despite the Trudeau era and his minister, 25 years later, the problem of native self–government has yet to be resolved. Why is this? Because the promised action was never taken, despite the fact that, on June 25, 1969, the Minister of Indian Affairs made a commitment to this House to act so as to give natives control over and title to their lands. Listen to what was said at the time. The minister promised to transfer to the provinces federal funds normally provided for native programs so that the provinces could take over the same responsibilities for natives that they had for other citizens in their provinces. He was committed to dismantling the department of Indian affairs and giving its mandate to other federal departments.

(1540)

What was this minister talking about? He was talking of transferring jurisdictions to the provinces, according to the Trudeau government; of eliminating costly and unproductive duplication and overlap. What did he actually do? The department is still in place. It will spend over $5 billion. As for transferring jurisdictions, in today's federal arena, only the Bloc Quebecois maintains that it is necessary.

The Sahtu agreement paves the way to something other than reserves for Natives. The Sahtu lands will fall under two categories: those covered by the regulations and municipal lands.

In the case of regulated lands, certain special conditions will ensure the Dene and Metis' title to the lands. These lands cannot be sold, mortgaged, seized or expropriated without being replaced. Municipal lands, on the other hand, can be sold or ceded, but if it is to an individual, they will no longer belong to the Sahtu. The Sahtu's improved municipal lands will be taxable, but those that are not improved will be tax–exempt.

This issue of ownership raises several questions, especially since the Native crisis of the summer of 1990. This crisis arose from claims for territorial autonomy and self–government. The claims made at that time almost amounted to an offense affecting urban areas inhabited by thousands of people with deep roots in their community.

In my mind, the Bloc Quebecois' support of the agreement with the Sahtu Dene and Metis does not mean opening the door to all land claims from a distant past. Neither the Bloc Quebecois nor any other political party can recognize the rights of one people at the expense of another. That is why negotiations on self–government are so sensitive. We must consider these negotiations in the light of today's realities, without forgetting the past, of course, but by acknowledging that lasting relations are based on mutual respect.

As the member for Châteauguay where the Kahnawake reserve is located, I know that this agreement is good. I salute the Mackenzie Valley agreement; I hope that it is only recognizing today's reality, above all, and that it does not discriminate against anyone.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):

[*Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktituk.*]

[*English*]

I rise to address the House on Bill C–16, the Sahtu Dene and Metis Land Claim Settlement Act.

I am extremely pleased to speak in support of the legislation. Bill C–16 fulfils one of the most important commitments made in the red book, a commitment to resolve outstanding land claims. As has been stated on a number of occasions this is a priority for the government.

In the speech from the throne the government made a more specific commitment to put before Parliament legislation to further the implementation of northern claim settlements. Bill C–16 is such legislation. It is an action to back up our words.

(1545)

Bill C–16 completes some unfinished business. It is a result of governments and aboriginal people working together in a new partnership of trust and mutual respect to ensure more certain and prosperous futures for all northerners.

As hon. members are aware, Bill C–16 implements the land claims agreement signed last September by Canada and the Sahtu Tribal Council, which represents some 2,000 Dene and Metis in the Sahtu settlement area of the Northwest Territories.

In the ratification vote held last July, 87 per cent of the Dene and 99 per cent of the Metis were in favour of the agreement. Voter turnout was very high.

As the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has stated, the House is now being asked to support the wishes of the Sahtu Dene and Metis as expressed in their ratification vote. I should say that the interests of the non–aboriginal people, northerners and all Canadians are amply protected in the agreement. The certainty of land ownership and rights provided

through the agreement will allow the major resource development projects to proceed. The moratorium on oil and gas exploration will be lifted. I remind hon. members that the government is committed to putting Canadians to work. This agreement will help us do that.

Because of the many benefits it will bring to the settlement area, the Government of the Northwest Territories is also a strong supporter of Bill C–16.

The opening sentence of the preamble in the Sahtu land claim agreement states:

> The Slavey, Hare and Mountain Dene of the Sahtu region have traditionally used and occupied lands in the Northwest Territories from time immemorial.

The location of that statement as the first sentence in the preamble is significant. It is the reason we are here today.

The land claim agreement and the bill before us recognized that the Slavey, Hare and Mountain Dene as the original inhabitants of the Sahtu region have aboriginal and treaty rights. These rights have been translated and affirmed through negotiation into the rights contained in the land claim agreement before us. It is a fact that the rights of the original inhabitants of the Sahtu have not been adequately dealt with in the past. The agreement returns to the Sahtu some measure of control over what happens to land and resources in their homeland.

I draw the attention of hon. members to the objectives of the land claim agreement. The objectives stress the cultural and economic relationships which the Sahtu Dene and Metis have with the land. The preservation and the strengthening of these links, along with the clarification of land and resource rights contained in the agreement, provide the basis for a renewed partnership in a very important region of the western Arctic.

The Sahtu settlement area encompasses some 280,000 square kilometres of land in the Mackenzie Valley. Under the land claim agreement the Dene and Metis will own more than 41,000 square kilometres of that area, including the mineral rights of about 1,800 square kilometres. The Sahtu Dene and Metis will also own a wide range of specified substances under settlement land. These include carving and construction stone, gravel, gypsum, peat, sand and other substances.

Under the agreement there will be two categories of Sahtu land. The first category is settlement land, which will be outside municipal boundaries. Sahtu municipal land, the second category, will be those lands located within municipal boundaries. Certain special conditions will apply to settlement land to ensure that it is never lost to the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

For example, these lands may never be sold, mortgaged or seized under court order. They will enjoy special tax treatment. If any of the land is expropriated, the government guarantees that it will be replaced so that the initial amount of settlement land is never reduced. Sahtu municipal land will be treated like other privately owned municipal land in that it may be sold or mortgaged. However, if Sahtu municipal land is sold or granted to an individual, it will no longer be considered Sahtu land and the provisions of the agreement will not apply to it.

(1550)

In this agreement third party interests will be protected and will continue. As I mentioned earlier, the certainty of ownership and rights this agreement will bring about are important for the non–aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories, as well as the aboriginal beneficiaries.

The settlement agreement should lead very quickly to new investments in the oil and gas sector, which in turn will mean employment and business opportunities for all northerners. Before any oil and gas developments can proceed, however, Canada must provide the Sahtu Tribal Council with an opportunity to present its views on the matter. This is a key principle of the land claim agreement.

As well, any operator proposing such activities must consult with the beneficiaries on such issues as environmental impact, potential impacts on wildlife harvesting, and Sahtu Dene and Metis employment opportunities. Similar consultations will also be required prior to the development or production of other types of minerals.

The settlement agreement also provides a fair and equitable financial settlement to the beneficiaries. Over the next 15 years the Sahtu Dene and Metis will receive payments totalling 75 million in 1990 dollars. They will also receive a share of the resource royalties from projects in the Mackenzie Valley. This will amount to 7.5 per cent of the first $2 million of resource royalties received by the government and 1.5 per cent of additional royalties.

Special efforts will be made to strengthen the traditional economies and economic self–sufficiency of the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

As the minister has already stated, governments are committed under the agreement to providing economic opportunities related to guiding, lodges, naturalist activities and commercial fishing.

These and other provisions will enable the five Sahtu communities in the settlement area to improve their social and economic opportunities to control their own destiny. It is they who will make the decisions. Promoting self–determination by aboriginal communities is a goal that is shared by all Canadians.

The settlement agreement accommodates the government's objective of increasing the participation of aboriginal peoples in the decision making process.

The Sahtu Dene and Metis will be full and equal partners in a renewable resources board that will be created to manage wildlife harvesting in the settlement area.

The board will also have the power to establish policies and propose regulations for all aspects of wildlife harvesting and commercial activities relating to wildlife.

The Sahtu Dene and Metis will also participate fully on boards responsible for land use planning, environmental reviews and the regulation of land and water use in the settlement areas. These boards will be institutions of public governments within the settlement area. The agreement will also provide constitutional protection of the special wildlife harvesting rights the Sahtu Dene and Metis will have in that settlement area, including the exclusive right to trap.

If for conservation reasons harvesting quotas must be set on certain wildlife species or populations or in certain areas, the harvesting needs of the Sahtu Dene and Metis will have first priority.

The wildlife harvesting provisions of the agreement are extremely important to the Sahtu Dene and Metis and other northerners. Each Sahtu community will establish a renewable resources council to manage the harvesting rights provided under land claim agreements.

I am pleased that Bill C–16 provides for the negotiation of self–government agreements with the Sahtu Dene and Metis. It guarantees them a role in any process to reform the constitution of the Northwest Territories.

I assure my hon. colleagues the agreement that will be put into force by Bill C–16 does not affect any aboriginal rights the Sahtu Dene and Metis may have to self–government.

A great deal of effort has been devoted to ensuring full and proper implementation of the Sahtu Dene and Metis land claim settlement agreement. In mid–1992, when the terms of the agreement were taking effect, a special working group was established to develop a 10–year implementation plan. This plan, which was signed at the same time as the land claim agreement, identifies all the obligations contained in the agreement, the activities required to fulfil those obligations and various other responsibilities, time frames and resource requirements.

(1555)

The implementation plan however is an accord among the parties to the land claim settlement. It is not part of the settlement agreement and therefore will not receive constitutional protection. Nevertheless it is a vital document because the land claim settlement must be properly implemented in order to fulfil its aims.

The implementation plan is extremely detailed. It reflects the commitment of all parties to ensure that the letter and the spirit of the agreement are fulfilled. It sets out more than 100 separate obligations, some of which may involve up to 20 distinct activities. All parties to the plan have responsibilities to fulfil many of these obligations. This underlines the fact that the Sahtu Dene and Metis land claim settlement imposes obligations not just on Canada but on the aboriginal beneficiaries and the Government of the Northwest Territories. It also emphasizes the need for all parties to work together in implementing the agreement.

A key focus of the implementation plan is to give substance to the commitments in the land claim agreement that the Sahtu Dene and Metis will have genuine and meaningful participation in the institutions of government.

To further the goal of successful implementation of the agreement an implementation committee will be formed comprising representatives of Canada, the territorial government and the Sahtu Tribal Council. The committee will guide the implementation process for at least the first 10 years, monitor the status of the implementation plan and, if necessary, amend the plan. It will also report each year on the implementation of the Sahtu agreement.

One of the first orders of business will be to establish an enrolment board which will determine eligibility for benefits under the agreement. Eligible Dene and Metis living within or outside the settlement area may also enrol with the board as beneficiaries of the agreement. To be eligible they must be Canadian citizens and Sahtu Dene or Sahtu Metis as defined in the agreement.

An aboriginal person who is not Sahtu Dene or Metis but lives in the settlement area and is a Canadian citizen may also be eligible to enrol after the settlement is in effect. This will be achieved through a community acceptance procedure which will be decided by the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

The Sahtu claim is the second regional Dene and Metis claim to be settled. The first settlement with the Gwich'in in the Mackenzie Delta came into force in December 1992. This agreement is now being implemented.

With the co–operation of hon. members on both sides of the House we can ensure the Sahtu Dene and Metis will also soon be benefiting from their own land claim agreement.

I urge my hon. colleagues to support Bill C–16. This claim will benefit all Canadians.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, it seems a bit like the further we get away from the first presentations the more murky some of the debate becomes.

I would like to make a couple of points and then ask a couple of related questions. We are really looking for open debate. We are talking about an area three–quarters the size of Nova Scotia to be set out in fee simple and constitutionally entrenched. We wanted to create a circumstance in which we could get input from members interested in inputting into the process. There will be a diversity of opinion. There is no doubt about that. We are certainly not looking to be obstructive in any way, shape or fashion.

I am reminded of a current example in British Columbia where we have quite a raging debate right now on the Kemano project. That project was signed by two levels of government in 1951 originally and in the ensuing 40–some years many societal values and other things have changed. That agreement was not constitutionally entrenched, but we have a very complicated agreement here that is planned for constitutional entrenchment.

My first question for the member who just spoke would be: Is there not some sympathy with the argument that constitutionally entrenching this level of detail has some inherent dangers?

(1600)

My second question relates to a statement the hon. member made relating to the Sahtu Dene and Metis co–operating on amending the constitution of the Northwest Territories. I would like clarification on that because that statement is something I am certainly not clear on.

Mr. Anawak: Mr. Speaker, my answer to the first question is no.

In 1999 there is an agreement to divide the Northwest Territories into two. One part will be Nunavut which is the area I presently represent and hope to continue to represent after 1999. The western Arctic will be the area the Sahtu Dene and Metis land claims fall under.

I suspect there will be a lot of discussion on the constitution of the western Arctic portion of the Northwest Territories. It is pretty well settled as to who will define the constitution of the Nunavut area and that is us, the Inuit.

I think all the land claims groups in the western Arctic portion of the Northwest Territories will have a great role in defining the constitution of that western Arctic territory prior to 1999 in order to ensure proper implementation of the western Arctic territory.

Presently all the claimant groups in that western Arctic area are about equal to the non–aboriginal people in that area as well. Therefore I think the groups will have a large role in defining the constitution of the Government of the Northwest Territories in the western part.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre): Mr. Speaker, in what sense is the hon. member using the word constitution? Is he using the word constitution in the sense of what constitutes the western Arctic lands, or is he using it in the sense of the British North America Act, which is really a legal provision that determines how government shall function and so on? Could he clarify that, please.

Mr. Anawak: Mr. Speaker, in the Northwest Territories we are basically colour blind. The proposal in the Northwest Territories is to have two new territories which are public government concepts. However a large role is played by the aboriginal people in that area.

I answered the question on the basis that the hon. member asked it in terms of the constitution of the Government of the Northwest Territories as it relates to the British North America Act. I was using it in those terms because all the aboriginal people will have a large role in a public government as well as the self–government again because of their sheer numbers.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, I have a follow–up question on the hon. member's response.

If the territories are going to create their own constitution, then I would be interested in knowing whether or not the aboriginal individuals will continue to have the protection of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as guaranteed to all Canadians within the Constitution of Canada.

(1605)

Mr. Anawak: I am sorry I did not get that very important question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): If I could be of assistance, I might ask the hon. member for Crowfoot to repeat his question to the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as the hon. member's response to the last question indicated there is going to be the creation of a constitution for the Northwest Territories, my question and concern is whether the aboriginal people involved will continue to enjoy the protection of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms within the Constitution of Canada as all Canadians now do.

Mr. Anawak: As I said, we are basically colour blind in the Northwest Territories. All the residents will continue to enjoy that privilege.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to Bill C–16. Although there are many positive things in this agreement, there are also many problems with it.

I wish to direct my comments to the compensation package given to the Sahtu Dene and Metis in this land claim agreement. I have many concerns about the precedent this agreement sets for land claim settlements and other negotiations in the rest of the country.

With every right there comes a corresponding responsibility and obligation. I see many rights in this agreement. The Sahtu are receiving a generous compensation package of land and money, rights to resource royalties, rights to restrict public access over large tracts of land and water, rights to participation in resource management decisions and environmental assessment, and rights to review economic plans and resource development initiatives.

Where are the responsibilities outlined? Where are the obligations summarized? With this agreement the government has lost certain rights by handing them over to the Sahtu peoples, but what is the diminishment in government responsibilities? These are questions which need to be answered.

The monetary compensation package in this agreement is generous. The Sahtu have been awarded a non–taxable $75 million cash settlement to be paid out over a 15–year period with accrued interest. This will add up to approximately $130 million for the current population of 1,755 people.

The agreement does not explicitly state why this money is being awarded. If it were compensation for not having had the use of the land they were entitled to under treaty, they are receiving $1 million for every year the government failed to fulfil the treaty land entitlement provisions of 128 acres per person. But there are few fences in the Northwest Territories so they have had the use of the land for traditional purposes.

In the recent Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement funds have been set aside to enable the First Nations to purchase the shortfall in treaty land themselves. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been set aside for this purpose, but they will not be able to buy anywhere near the amount of land the Sahtu have been given in addition to their cash compensation.

Apparently this money was just part of the settlement. Does this mean that the government would have given them even more land if they had not received the $75 million? This is extremely generous.

What is the responsibility that goes with the awarding of the cash payment and these royalties? If the Sahtu Dene and Metis have not lost any of the privileges which accrue to them under the Indian Act, then what does this mean? Does the crown have a fiduciary obligation with respect to Sahtu monetary decisions? On the face of this agreement it would appear that it does.

Settlement dollars and land title are vested in Sahtu organizations, not individuals. If five or ten years down the road the Sahtu people from a community charge that one of these organizations have mismanaged their money or land, who will be responsible? If, as the former Indian affairs minister implied, this settlement has given the Sahtu the necessary land and resources for a brighter future, do the Sahtu also have the obligation to actively pursue that goal for future generations?

(1610)

This agreement also provides the Sahtu Dene and Metis with resource royalties. As previously stated they will receive 7.5 per cent of the first $2 million of resource royalties received by the Government of Canada in any given year and then 1.5 per cent of any additional royalties. These royalty shares will be from the entire Mackenzie valley. What is the explanation for this? How can the government justify this royalty deal to the Canadian people?

The Sahtu are given fee simple title to more than 41,000 square kilometres with subsurface rights on 1,800. This agreement gives them traditional use rights and significant input on resource development decisions on over 280,000 square kilometres. Now they will receive a share of government royalties over 900,000 square kilometres of the Mackenzie valley.

All resource royalties are calculated on a different basis. Oil and gas royalties tend to be based on production. Mineral royalties are based on profit. Exploration for diamonds and other minerals is on the increase in the Mackenzie valley. We do not know what our proven resource potential is north of 60.

Just exactly how much money are we talking about here? It appears the Sahtu do not know, the government does not know, no one knows. Only the taxpayers of Canada will know when they have to make up for the royalty shortfall out of their pockets.

As each northern comprehensive claim is settled more groups will receive a share of the government royalties. The Gwich'in are already a part of this deal as was stated earlier. As each group is added on, the government share of royalties decreases proportionately. What precedent does this set for claims settlements in the rest of Canada?

If the government gives up most of its resource royalties based on these precedents north of 60 other taxes will clearly have to go up. The Canadian people are already overtaxed. As a result of this agreement obviously they will have to pay more in the future.

Is this government being responsible? Is it giving hope to future generations of Canadians?

This new right to resource royalties the government has given the Sahtu people does not appear to have any responsibilities attached. The minister talks about giving them some control over resources so they can control their own economic destiny. That is certainly a worthwhile objective, but where does it say any of this money will be used to further the aspirations of the Sahtu people? They continue to rely on the federal government to provide special programs and funding.

The government may suggest Sahtu responsibility for all of these functions will come later after self–government agreements are reached. However this government is taking great pains to point out that no one knows what the eventual form of self–government will be. This government has no idea what

responsibilities the Sahtu or other aboriginal groups will assume under their specific self–government formulas.

We are talking about the rights and responsibilities that arise out of this particular agreement. The Sahtu are receiving many monetary rights without the attachment of any significant fiscal responsibilities. They are receiving a land base and royalties without an obligation to use them to further the economic and self–sufficiency objectives outlined in the agreement. I am very concerned that it sets a bad precedent for fiscal responsibility in future self–government negotiations.

This agreement also establishes a number of boards for resource management and environmental assessment. In some ways this is a positive development. The Sahtu have recognized that many of the board activities, functions and decisions are technical and not political.

Opening up the appointment process allows the Sahtu to nominate technically competent people to represent their views and interests at the table. If those people are not doing their jobs in the future, they can be removed easily without the repercussions removal of a political nominee would create.

Increasing the number of boards also adds to an existing problem. In 1992 one Toronto paper said there were already 6,200 bureaucrats and 800 boards and agencies in Yellowknife. There are fewer than 60,000 people living in the Northwest Territories in 62 communities. That is more than one bureaucrat for every 10 people and one board or agency for every 70. Surely that is enough. Imagine the chaos if we tried to run the rest of the country as inefficiently.

(1615)

Yet this bill proposes more boards and with one or two exceptions does not propose to eliminate parallel boards at other levels of government. All stakeholders should have the right to have input into resource management decisions and these boards provide the Sahtu people with a mechanism for that participation.

Will these boards provide a more informed and cost effective way for northern residents to ensure that environmentally and economically sustainable decisions are made in the best interests of all Canadians? Will they take the responsibility to represent all interests seriously? I hope that is the purpose of these boards. I hope that this was not just a Tory job creation scheme for the north. Only time will tell.

The Sahtu, Dene and Metis received title to more than 41,000 square kilometres. The settlement lands of the Sahtu peoples fall within the treaty 11 territory. In 1921 treaty 11 was signed by the crown and the ancestors of the Sahtu Dene who are now signatories to this land claim agreement.

Among other things treaty 11 provided for the establishment of reserve lands. It is obvious now and it was obvious then that the whole reserve system envisioned by Ottawa bureaucrats was unworkable.

It was even more irrelevant for the people living under completely different conditions in the Northwest Territories. Reserves do not make sense to people who must follow the caribou to survive. One only has to look at the tragedies of substance abuse and suicides in communities like Davis Inlet to see the end results of past misguided policies of clumping people who traditionally ranged much further afield into small groups.

It is because the crown never upheld its promise in 1921 to provide treaty lands that we find ourselves discussing this agreement here today. The government did not have to make reserves out of this land entitlement. It could have spread the entitlement out as land in severalty in traditional camps or along family trap lines. This should have been a specific claim settlement because it lies within treaty 11, not a comprehensive claim settlement.

During the 1970s the Dene and Metis people took the position that they had never surrendered their rights to all of the land. It appears that the government chose to agree with this position rather than uphold or slightly modify the provisions of the treaty.

Under treaty 11 people were entitled to 128 acres per person. If the government had fulfilled its lawful obligation under the terms of the treaty even at this late date far less land would have been transferred. Although the Metis would not have received land under the old treaty, including them now means that the Sahtu Dene and Metis beneficiaries would have received just over 900 square kilometres of land with subsurface rights.

In this agreement the government doubled the treaty land entitlement to 1,800 square kilometres. Then it stepped completely outside of the treaty and beyond its lawful obligations and added another 39,000 square kilometres without accompanying subsurface rights. Instead of 128 acres per person the Sahtu have received 20 square kilometres per person. I would call this quite generous.

After doubling the treaty land entitlement and after guaranteeing traditional use rights over the entire settlement area of 280,000 square kilometres, why did the government give the Sahtu fee simple title to 39,000 more kilometres? I would ask the question is this fair and is it a just settlement?

Recent court decisions in Canada have recognized aboriginal rights to the land. In the Delgamuukw Court of Appeal decision last June the court clearly distinguished between land ownership and land use. The traditional use rights are to be determined on a case by case basis. The aboriginal rights referred to are for the use and enjoyment of the land according to tradition and culture while recognizing there are other third party interests which also require use of the land base.

The courts do not currently hold that the aboriginal right to the land is a right of ownership but of use. This agreement goes far beyond that. Not only have fewer than 1,800 Sahtu Dene and Metis retained the right to hunt, trap and fish throughout the settlement area, but they have a share of resource royalties in perpetuity, a generous cash compensation and a significant land and resource base.

(1620)

For all the rights the Sahtu have received, what are their accompanying responsibilities and obligations? Despite the generosity of this agreement, the crown retains responsibility for program delivery and for special economic development programs to encourage self–sufficiency. These programs are in addition to the many government programs the Sahtu and other Canadians are eligible for.

Where is the incentive or the responsibility to become economically self–sufficient if the government is committed to providing programs indefinitely?

The crown has gone far beyond its lawful obligations and is not getting any diminishment of its responsibilities in return. Although the agreement states that government is not liable for damages or losses due to the failure of a Sahtu organization to comply with its administrative obligations, what does this really mean?

If the government does not get any concessions from the signatories regarding their assumption of program funding and delivery in this settlement then it is certainly not going to get it from south of 60 where governments cannot afford to be quite so generous.

The continuation of government's involvement will incur increasing fiduciary obligations despite the fact the Sahtu now have the land and money to begin to take responsibility for these functions themselves.

This agreement is setting a precedent for self–government negotiations down the road. Where First Nations in the future may have a tax base and the economic means to provide for their own programs, will they choose to rely on government funding? Instead of downsizing with the devolution of programs and authority away from Indian affairs, we seem to be encouraging greater bureaucracy with little fiscal responsibility at the local level.

What precedent is the crown setting for negotiators in other treaty territories and in comprehensive claim areas throughout Canada? There is a clause which extinguishes all future Sahtu claims to additional land and water, but treaty 11 also had an extinguishment clause. The government chose to renegotiate the land entitlement provisions and resource royalties even though it takes the position that the Sahtu did surrender title to the land in 1921. The extinguishment clause in this agreement apparently provides greater certainty to the government, but extinguishment is extinguishment.

Modern day treaties are far more complex and it is hoped more equitable, but will they be any more binding on the parties?

The Indian Act was created in an era when paternalistic government believed that the Indian and Inuit peoples of Canada needed protection from unscrupulous land speculators and others, but it evolved into the misguided monster we see today.

The Indian Act created dependencies where none existed before. Government assumed responsibility for all decisions regarding monetary or land transactions and removed all responsibility and decision making authority from the people it sought to protect.

It is time that government got out of the business of making decisions for people. Government must restore the dignity of the Indian, Inuit and Metis people by letting them make their own decisions and allow them to be responsible for the consequences of those decisions.

Government has given the Sahtu a settlement with extensive rights. Now it must ensure that the Sahtu assume the responsibilities that go with those rights.

The government of the day has the right to negotiate fair and just settlements with aboriginal peoples who have outstanding claims, but the government also has the responsibility to ensure that those settlements are fair for all Canadians.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):

[*Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut*]

Mr. Speaker, the attitude of the Reform Party reminds me of the story of Rip Van Winkle who slept for so many years that when he woke up things had changed drastically. I think Reformers are still sleeping with the attitude they have.

(1625)

Their attitude is surprising when they say how generous the government is. I think the Sahtu Dene and Metis have been pretty generous by giving up 240,000 square kilometres of land to the Government of Canada and only retaining 41,000 square kilometres and 1,800 of subsurface and surface rights. I think that is pretty generous.

I would like to think that the Reform Party can see reason. However, that might be impossible to ask of such outdated thinking.

To the three speakers from the Reform Party, how would they feel if they woke up one morning and somebody said they can live on their land but laws are going to be proposed which they have to obey on how to live, where to live, outlawing their beliefs, taking away their dignity, taking away their hunting rights, not allowing them to vote, putting in a new justice system

that is totally foreign to them, and in the process infecting them with smallpox, tuberculosis and other communicable diseases?

How can they be so dense that they cannot understand that the Government of Canada and the people of Canada are now trying to correct a situation, an injustice that has been around for a few hundred years?

I will repeat my remarks from earlier. The Reform Party members talk as if the aboriginal people are invading their land. It is as if we are taking land away from them. They can record their history in hundreds of years. We can record ours in thousands and tens of thousands of years. The sheer audacity of this group—I am at a loss for words.

How would they feel if they woke up one morning and suddenly found themselves subject to a totally different kind of life than they had been used to for years and years?

Some of them make statements that they are all for aboriginal self–government, self–determination. Strip away that veneer and I think all we see is paternalistic statements from the Reform Party. It is like saying some of my best friends are Indians. It is good to say it but it does not really mean much, because the respect and the support have to be there from within rather than just saying it on the surface.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his comments. I do not think that anyone would deny that there have been injustices done. I detailed some examples of that, how that has taken place down through the history of our country.

I think also that what I was trying to get at in my presentation is that when rights are granted to individuals or to groups there are corresponding responsibilities that go with those rights. I do not see in this agreement where that is taking place within the confines of the agreement. I see all sorts of things being granted to this group of Canadians, and I think we have to distinguish here that we are all Canadians and we have all benefited from this great land of ours in different ways. Even the native people, the aboriginal people, have clearly benefited from Canada. My comment is that they also have to take responsibility. If they are going to go down the road toward self–government—there clearly does not seem to be any definition of that forthcoming from the opposite side of the House—then obviously there should be this devolution of power, to the Sahtu people in this particular case, to the aboriginal people in Canada, but also they should be seeking to give up any further rights to aboriginal programs.

(1630)

My hope always was that once we came to a reasonable and fair settlement and self–government for the aboriginal people that at some point we would all be treated equally. There would not be any programs specifically based on race any more.

I see that this agreement does not accomplish that, even though the monetary compensation is paid, even though the land use is guaranteed, even though the fee simple land is given over, even though subsurface mineral rights are given to these people from the Government of Canada. The bottom line still appears to be that they do not give up any future access to aboriginal programs, either existing ones or ones in the future. That was the thrust of my speech. That is my concern.

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member and I have a hard time coming to grips with the root of his reasoning.

He suggests somehow that Canada is giving them something. In his speech he even goes on to suggest that other agreements would have given them less. I cannot really comprehend it. Then the hon. member goes on to say we are going to give them these things but what are their obligations. In other words he wants to pay homage or lip service to self–government but then turns around and says we should be making the rules for them and tell them what their obligations are. That is what I hear in the speech.

We are not giving the natives anything. It is already theirs. We are simply arriving at a suitable accommodation so that the country can forge ahead.

I saw a cartoon once where two Indians are standing on Mount Royal watching Jacques Cartier land. The soldiers are about to get off the boat and come ashore and one Indian is saying to the other: ''Let them land. What harm can they do?''

Does the hon. member really believe that we are giving them something by these agreements? I have really failed to understand what direction he is coming from. We have already taken. It is already theirs.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and comments regarding my presentation.

What I was referring to was that the ancestors of the Sahtu Dene did sign treaty No. 11. As signatories to that treaty certain things were decided on, one of which was that there should be 128 acres granted per person under the treaty. What we see under this new agreement goes far beyond that.

I believe that as a people and a country we are giving up something. If we are not then I would ask the member in return where is the $75 million coming from? It is coming from

somewhere. Someone is giving that money and it is we as a nation, which includes all the aboriginal people, all of us are giving that. I am not saying we as a race or we as a party or we as a government. I am saying we as a nation are giving up some of the things that are in this agreement. I dispute his point.

(1635)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Given the nature of the debate today, if any one of you should be watching the clock very carefully you will notice that I am going to extend the period of questions and comments because I want to hear from the Secretary of State for Training and Youth.

I think all of us in the House would recognize her interest in this issue and that of others. But in this instance I would like to give the floor to hon. Secretary of State for Training and Youth.

Hon. Ethel Blondin–Andrew (Secretary of State (Training and Youth)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member. I know that he has had intense briefing this very day and put forward quite a few ideas concerning this claim.

I just want to say that some of the things I am hearing in this debate are very disturbing. It is a very ethnocentric view that is being perpetrated, but then I suppose that is the reason why we have different political ideologies. We totally support the land claims process. In fact as a government we want to make that process fairer and more equitable for the aboriginal people.

It is unfortunate that this particular claim is receiving all of the concerns that the Reform Party has. It is not specifically the Sahtu claim that is being dealt with here. It is the Reform Party's political agenda regarding aboriginal issues: self–government, compensation. However there are a number of things I want to hit on.

Talking about treating all Canadians the same I think is very misguided and misdirected through this claims debate because talking about treating aboriginal people the same is not treating them fairly necessarily.

If you know the language of constitutional debates and of aboriginal justice you will know that treating people who are poor, who are probably one of the poorest groups in the country, who have the highest unemployment, who have the highest rate of suicide—in Big Cove one a month—if you think about the social statistics, the under representation of aboriginal people in the financial institutions, the political institutions and when you think about the over representation of those people in terms of incarceration, poor health, poverty, suicide and a number of other social malaise, you will know that treating the people the same is not treating them fairly. Maybe we can eradicate that view.

Second, I would like to say that you are talking about the finality of the claim. It was my grandfather, Chief George Zault Blondin who signed treaty 11. It was with the good intent of holding in trust those things that we hold dear to us. I know from the history of my people that it was not to forfeit anything. It was signed to secure and hold close the things that mean something to aboriginal people.

This is a peculiar arrangement, a very difficult process, which for the last 20 or 24 years these people have undergone. They voted for it. They want it. We recognize that as a government. By taking the debate one step further, the hon. member alleges that if we have a deal there has to be finality, there has to be an element of certainty, that if we reach an agreement the people have to be responsible and must not ask for anything else.

My question to the hon. member is this. Is he alleging that once provinces become provinces they should not ask for any more transfer payments? Is he alleging that once municipal governments are formed they should not look for any subsidies in terms of tax benefits or anything like that? Is he alleging that any form of government that is established outside of the federal government should have that same finality as well? If we are going to treat people the same, so should governments be treated the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I will certainly give the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River the same generosity of time to respond.

(1640)

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I will address my comments to the last question first. That is not what I am advocating. When the municipalities of the Sahtu Dene are formed I would think and hope they would be eligible for the same programs and the same benefits as any municipality in Canada.

What I was referring to were programs specific to one group based on race, in other words, specific aboriginal programs. That is what I was referring to. Certainly, once they form their municipalities and have self–government, they should be eligible for the same programs as any other municipality in any province.

I have a couple of other quick points because I know time is of the essence. I agree with the hon. member. The system has failed and part of the reason it has failed in the past is that they have not been treated equally. People were segregated and shoved on to reserves and they had to live there.

That is where the system failed in the past. They were not treated equally. Therefore I still hold on to the long–term goal that gradually we can reach a point where all Canadian citizens will be treated equally. I noticed that the hon. member used the term that she was interested in a fair and equitable settlement for the aboriginal people. Certainly that is my concern and I think the concern of my colleagues in the Reform Party as well.

We go a bit beyond that. I would say to the hon. member that we are concerned about a fair and equitable settlement not just for the aboriginal people but for all the people of Canada. We feel we do not just represent one group. We represent all Canadians and we are speaking on behalf of all Canadians when we raise these issues.

She also mentioned that she had concerns about the Reform Party's position, that we were using this debate and it was not specific to this agreement. I agree with her. Obviously we are trying to bring other issues concerning the aboriginal people to light using the format of the debate here today.

We are very concerned about the precedent that one agreement will set. It might be used in future agreements throughout the country and we are using the debate to bring forward some of these other issues. I thank the hon. member for her comments and her questions.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The hon. member for Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, MIL Davie shipbuilding; the hon. member for Portneuf, bilingualism; the hon. member for Frontenac, job creation.

[*English*]

Mr. Elijah Harper (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken here a few times. I have made some statements but this is my first speech in the House. I am very honoured to be sent to the Parliament of Canada to represent my constituents, not only the aboriginal people in my area but also many non–aboriginal people.

As an aboriginal person and First Nations member, I have been involved in this discussion for many years both as a chief in my reserve, Red Sucker Lake Band, and also as a member of the Legislative Assembly in Manitoba for well over 11 years. I have committed myself to this process for a very long time. What I find is that I have to repeat myself over and over again many times to get my point across.

When we talk about the aboriginal people we have been here for thousands and thousands of years. We have had governments for thousands of years. We had societies. We had political structures, social structures. We had our own languages. We traded with other nations. In that way we have existed as a nation, as a government in this country. When the first European people or the settlers arrived they were met by the First Nations in this country. They welcomed these people on to the shores of what we call Canada today. Whether it was on the west coast or on the St. Lawrence River we were here; even through Hudson Bay, which I am very familiar with, down to the Nelson River to Winnipeg we welcomed these people.

(1645)

If it had not been for the kindness and the generosity of our people many of those people would have perished. If the Lord Selkirk settlers had not been helped by Chief Peguis, many of these people would have perished.

What surprises me in this country is the lack of understanding or the ignorance of the history of this country. We see the Canadian Constitution being proposed as supreme law in this country, entrenching in the law of this land the recognition of two founding nations, the French and the English. We know very well that the first people here were the First Nations. Yet your Constitution is based upon the supremacy of God and the rule of law.

There is a myth concerning the Canadian Constitution and the truth. Any constitution should be able to tell the truth, built upon strong foundations that will not crumble but will stand the test of time. The Canadian Constitution never did that. That is why it crumbled, it did not acknowledge the truth and reality in this country.

It was the First Nations that contributed so much to this country by signing treaties. What does it mean when you sign treaties? It means that you enter into an agreement with another nation, in this case the settler people represented by the Queen with our representatives of the First Nations.

There were many pre–Confederation treaties and a number of treaties made in Manitoba and today what are called modern day treaties. Treaties are about establishing relationships. That is what it is all about. As a matter of fact, when we say inherent right to self–government, we are exercising the very authority to sign the treaties. We did not need Parliament to tell us we have treaties. As a matter of fact, there should be a formal recognition by Parliament that we always had the inherent right to self–government. It is not something that can be granted by Parliament or by Canada, because we came to the table as equals. That is what the treaty making process is all about, establishing that.

In that process we shared the land and resources of this country from which many people have benefited all over the world. How generous and how kind we have been to the rest of this country. What kind of benefits have we received so far? Look at the situation in Davis Inlet or in my home at Red Sucker Lake. We have poor housing conditions. We do not have running water. We do have unemployment rates higher than in the cities. I am sure that if unemployment reaches 20 per cent it is a national disaster across the country, but it is 90 per cent in many of these communities. Nobody cries about those kinds of conditions.

All we want is governments to honour and respect the treaties they have signed with us. We do not expect anything more or anything less because we have contributed so much to this great country and we have not benefited at all.

(1650)

We talk about the special relationships. I know we have a special relationship, but I do not mean special in the way that we are better off than anyone. We have a unique relationship which no other group has in this country. We want governments to honour that.

This government has proceeded to do what has not been done, and that is to settle and implement inherent right to self–government. We are not asking it to give us self–government. It has never been anyone else's concern to give us anything. It is a matter of acknowledging that we have always had that.

We talk about the Fathers of Confederation in Charlottetown. What about our forefathers who signed the treaties? Can they not be mentioned in history as contributing to the well–being of everybody else in this country? There is no formal recognition of our people. All we are asking for is to settle the outstanding issues, the treaty obligations. The spirit and intent of the treaties should be honoured.

Many people have risen and spoken here but all we asked for, compared with what money has been spent, has been very little. Consider how much land and resources have been generated in this country and shared by the aboriginal people. I am sure billions and billions of dollars have been made off this great country. Yet when we ask for money we are not asking in the sense that we are begging for it, we have been asking governments to honour their treaty obligations, if only a small portion allocated under the control of First Nations.

If we look at the treaty making process, government officials went back and developed the wording. They never really understood what the native people were saying. First, our way of life and our philosophy is to share what we have so we shared the land and the resources so that we would have respect for each other, that we would live side by side with each and that we would co–exist with each other and help each other. That was the spirit and intent.

It was never our intention to be governed by a government. We have never extinguished or surrendered the right to govern ourselves. It has never been that. When we signed the treaties they were signed nation to nation. As a matter of fact, it was a recognition when we signed treaties that we were nations. As a nation we expect governments not to act unilaterally in the way history has shown us and in which they created the Indian Act which has total control over our lives. It even defines who we are today. This has to be done away with and we have to have a renewed partnership. That is the challenge that faces us today. How can we honour that? I know we have honoured our bargain. We expect the government with the support of the opposition to honour the promises of its forefathers, those they made to us. We do not expect anything more or anything less. That is all we ask for, we do not ask for very much. We have been very patient for a very long time and it is time the government honour those treaties.

(1655)

That is why I am very honoured to speak on Bill C–16. It is a very small part. We want to be part of this country and we have contributed so much to this country as well, but no one seems to talk about it or at least acknowledge it. If they acknowledge it somehow they seem to be obligated that they have to provide more things or more benefits.

If the governments alone were to provide for their treaty obligations there would really be no need to ask for more funding. We talk about finality. In the treaties it says as long as the sun shines and the rivers flow and the grass grows. That is the terminology used. It is forever, the relationship that we have.

We are very committed to this country. We want Canada to be wealthy. We want Canada to be united. We love this country. We love this land. We love everybody. I often say jokingly that our immigration policy was wide open, and it has been to show what kind of people we have been. We have been very kind but it has been the governments here that have always dictated and put restrictions on. It seems like within our own homeland we are treated like foreigners, we are treated like outside citizens, second class citizens.

The first order of business should be the First Nations business in this country. We should settle the treaties and settle land claims. I speak in favour of this bill. I hope members will support this bill.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Churchill on his first participation in debate. I think we were very appreciative of the words he spoke, his commitment to Canada, and the warmth and conviction with which he speaks.

I have spoken to many Canadians and I am sure I speak for millions of Canadians who would like to express appreciation to the hon. member for Churchill for the part he played in the debate over the Meech Lake accord. I have had many people express to me their appreciation for the fact that the hon. member for Churchill played a major and a significant role in defeating the Meech Lake accord and preventing it from being imposed upon Canadians.

I also want to congratulate the hon. member on his concern over Canada as being a country built on two founding races. I know that my Reform colleagues and I for many years now have shared the view that as a false conception of Canada it is not relevant in very many parts of the country and certainly does not recognize the role played by the true founding race of Canada, the aboriginal people.

I do have a question. On our side of the House and in our caucus we have asked the minister of Indian affairs, we have asked the Prime Minister and we have asked many influential members on the government side to provide us with a definition of aboriginal self–government. I heard the hon. member for Churchill speak about aboriginal self–government today. It is very difficult for us to fulfil our role as an opposition until we have the terms of aboriginal self–government defined for us so we can determine whether they are good and just and will make us a better country and will enhance the role of aboriginal people within the nation, whether it may be divisive and negative on the country. I plead with the hon. member for Churchill. Would he at least be so considerate as to give us his definition of what aboriginal self–government is.

(1700)

Mr. Harper (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, self–government simply put is to administer our own affairs, to be able to make our own decisions and to determine our own future. It is a very simple statement but very complicated to implement. Self–government entails many things. It means to start developing our own institutions, language, culture, education and our own First Nations government structures.

In negotiations self–government is based upon what kind of agreement is reached. My position has always been that the fundamental basis and foundation from which we negotiate are the treaties. When the first governments met we sat down together and came up with a treaty. That formed a basis for our relationship with the government. In return we were to have certain benefits.

However we have never extinguished the right to self–government. It has never been surrendered. To me the treaty making process has never come to an end. What needs to happen is the government needs to sit down with the First Nations in this country.

One of the reasons the constitutional process failed is that the very question the hon. member asked was raised at the constitutional table. All the first ministers and the Prime Minister asked the same question. They were the ones really to say what kind of structure we have. It was not based on equality. We were not being invited as equals; we were just invitees at the first ministers conferences. It failed because we were not equal in the negotiations.

Sometimes we get invited equally on a level playing field. However often when we are on that level playing field or let us say we are in a skating arena we find we have no ice skates or equipment, yet we play according to their rules. That is the kind of process we have been involved in. We are not being treated equally.

It should be based on the treaties, nation to nation. Once that is recognized instead of trying to determine what is best for us, we should sit down as equals, equal to First Nations. I think that would resolve a lot of the questions.

Self–government is not something which is defined in a paper. It has to be negotiated with the First Nations. It may vary from the Micmacs to the Haida people because they have different cultures and a different way of doing things.

There is the potlatch system. Potlatch is a system of government. We have the clan system which is another traditional form of government. There is Iroquois confederacy. These different systems of government have been here for a long time, whether they will be modified or not. Those are things we go through.

When the hon. member asks for a definition of self–government, it is a matter defining it in the negotiation process or through a treaty process. It is not black and white but it is a process that hopefully the governments are going to be undertaking so we can resolve it.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, we are competing with each other to be recognized by you.

First of all I would like to congratulate the member for his speech today and the straightforwardness with which he expresses his point of view.

(1705)

I for one am in this House to help resolve this problem. I definitely would like to see as much consultation and work as possible with the aboriginal peoples, the Indians, the Metis and the Inuit so we can resolve these long term outstanding settlements and agreements.

I know the settler people are here. I know the white man took over, those immigrants when they first landed. Perhaps the hon. member for Churchill would appreciate the current 1 per cent rule the Liberal government has and he would have maintained control.

Repetition is important; it is a fact of life. If he has to give a similar speech again and if he has to repeat it five or six times, I would encourage him to do that.

There have been a lot of wrongs committed. A lot of injustices to the native peoples have been perpetrated over the years. We in this House are not the ones who have perpetrated this crime nor made these mistakes. We are here to learn from these mistakes and we are here to try to make it better.

It is in this light and in this vein I wish to address the hon. member and let him know that what we are concerned about is the consultative process. Will he agree with us or put forward the next time he speaks the type of self–government the native people or the aboriginal people want will comply with the current law? He has his problems with the other tribes and other

nations. There is a problem with that interfacing with the laws of the land as they are today. It is a fact of life that the Government of Canada is here and it has to be negotiated with.

Will the hon. member try to put an answer in the context that what they are seeking for in terms of self–government will in fact comply with the laws we have today? How can we get over that hurdle? What would his response be on that basis?

Mr. Harper (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, certainly the problem we are wrestling with is not as a result of our laws. It is as a result of the laws that were passed here a long, long time ago, well over 100 years ago.

Many of our people have been put outside of their communities as a result of laws that were passed here. If we had exercised our own laws many of our people would still be enjoying the benefits of our societies. When we are concerned about leaving out people or people not being represented or losing their rights, the principles of that will be maintained by our people.

Certainly, when we are talking about self–government structures we cannot operate with the kind of laws that have been put in place. If we did that all we would be doing would be implementing the colonial oppressive policies on ourselves. Therefore, a new kind of system would have to be recognized and a level of government would have to be established in which we would be able to exercise jurisdiction within our own territory.

When talking about justice, whose justice are we talking about? Usually the dominant society has the upper hand in dispelling justice which is quite different from ours in terms of value systems. We could get into a big debate about that, but I certainly think the aboriginal people in their own traditions have maintained the kind of structures that would provide all kinds of rights and benefits to our communities.

I do not see any kind of loss of rights if we were to administer our own jurisdiction in our own territory. I have no hesitation in saying that.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise and respond to the hon. member for Churchill.

This really is what Parliament is all about. I am personally very honoured to have been here for the hon. member's first intervention and to have heard him speak so passionately and honestly about his life, his experiences, dreams and aspirations. Obviously it came from the heart. It is not something I could live; I cannot be in the hon. member's skin. We can learn a tremendous amount from each other.

I want to assure the hon. member, other members in this House and others in our land that our role here is to oppose the government, to challenge its program and to try to ensure that by a spirited and healthy debate we end up with a better solution than we would have had without that debate.

(1710)

I thank the hon. member for his intervention. I look forward to more in the future.

What would the member do faced with this situation? The situation is that all across the land on reservations there are all of the social ills and the unemployment the hon. member described. How do we go about changing that, not just on reservations but for urban Indians as well?

Mr. Harper (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, first of all we would like to be in a position to make our own decisions. We would like to exercise our own jurisdiction in respect of our territories. At the same time we would expect the government to honour its treaties so that we would have the resources and the financial wherewithal to address and alleviate some of those problems that are so apparent in our communities such as unemployment, the high suicide rates and the economic conditions.

We are not asking for any special funding or to consider anything special. All we are asking is that the government honour its treaty obligations. Housing, medicare and education are under the treaties, just to give an example of what we are talking about.

What is important is that the government tends to make decisions for us and that has to stop. By not supporting this bill I think what is being said is that the hon. member is agreeing to the policy which exists today. What is being said to me is that he is not agreeing with the government's policy and legislation to allow us to make those decisions.

With respect, the amount of dollars we are talking about is very small compared to the spending government has had. As I said, we have been very generous. We are not asking for billions of dollars in this package. We are asking for a very small amount of money compared to the kind of money spent overall.

My first answer is, allow us to control it and honour your commitment by supporting this bill. Actions speaker louder than words.

Mr. Anawak: Mr. Speaker, just a point of order to correct what I believe is a small error. In Canada we have reserves, not reservations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I am not sure that was a point of order. However, the point has been made and I thank the parliamentary secretary for his intervention.

Let me add also my own remarks that I feel honoured to have been in the Chair on the occasion of the member for Churchill's first intervention and debate on the floor of the House of Commons.

Let me also compliment all members in the House, particularly those who have participated in the debate and even those who did not participate through this intervention but who listened very attentively. The tone was most encouraging and the sensitivity in respect of the debate is much appreciated by the Chair. I compliment all members present.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, I would like first to thank the hon. member for Churchill who gave us a lesson in history. He spoke from his heart and also with great wisdom, and I can only hope that his speech will help improve our relations with aboriginal nations, as well as our understanding of those people.

This having been said, we have before us a bill to approve, give effect and declare valid the comprehensive land claim agreement of the Sahtu Dene and Metis, which was signed on September 6, 1993. The region covered is a territory of 280,000 square kilometres, in which live some 2,000 people representing five communities. The Bloc Quebecois supports this legislation.

(1715)

At this point, I would like, for the benefit of those who are listening here and across the country, to give a chronology of the events which have led to the tabling of this bill today.

In 1976, the federal government started negotiating under a land claim process with the Dene and the Metis of the Mackenzie Valley. In 1981, these negotiations led to a final agreement which was concluded in April of 1990. On September 6, 1993, the agreement was signed by the Queen and the Sahtu Tribal Council, in Fort Norman, Northwest Territories.

A plebiscite was held from July 5 to July 8, 1993, to ratify the agreement. The agreement was approved by 85 per cent of the Dene and by 99 per cent of the Metis. On January 13 and February 11, 1994, the tribal council approved certain amendments to the agreement. Just what is this agreement all about?

First, its purpose is to achieve certainty and clarity of rights with respect to ownership and use of some lands and their natural resources. The agreement is divided in two parts. The first one deals with issues such as self–government, royalties on resources, taxation, financial and economic measures, rights over water, as well as wildlife harvesting and management.

Financial compensations totalling $75 million, in dollars of 1990, are to be provided over a period of about 15 years. An annual proportion of royalties collected on resources from the Mackenzie Valley is also covered by the agreement. As well, an annual proportion of royalties collected on resources from the Norman Wells oil and gas development is also covered. Indeed, 7.5 per cent of the first two million dollars collected by the government during a given year and 1.5 per cent of any additional amount will be used as royalties.

The agreement also includes participation in land use planning, renewable resources management, water and land control, as well as preservation of the Sahtu heritage in the region covered. Federal, territorial and municipal laws will continue to apply to Sahtu Dene and Metis, and also to the land.

A Renewable Resources Board is created. This board is a legal entity, which means that it can take legal action and can itself be sued. It can also set policies and propose regulations on the commercial harvesting of wild animals and on commercial activities related to wildlife. It will be the main wildlife management organization in the region. It is composed of seven members appointed jointly by the federal government and the territorial government, with at least three members chosen from a list submitted by the Sahtu Tribal Council.

I said that this agreement was in two parts. The second part concerns land and distinguishes between areas with rights to underground resources and areas with only surface rights. Property rights cover 41,437 square kilometres in the Mackenzie Valley region, with mining rights for 1,813 square kilometres.

At this time, I think it is appropriate to talk about the aboriginal question in a broader way, going beyond the specific subject before us now and putting it in the larger context in which it belongs anyway and on which the rest must necessarily be based. Perhaps we could begin with the native issue in Quebec.

I remember a song heard fairly often on radio and television in the 1970s, which told the story of what our colleague from Nunatsiaq was talking about earlier, I believe.

(1720)

In the beginning, in his tent, a very easygoing native man received a white man, who asked permission to plant a stake, just a single little stake. The reaction was, ''Well, my God, it is just a single stake, so why object, it is so simple and easy; it is not much, go ahead, plant your stake''. Some days passed and he was asked permission for a second stake; a few more days went by and a request came for a third stake. Several months later, after a series of stakes had been installed across the forest, he was asked to let a wire go through. Every time, the native had always agreed in good faith and complied with great pleasure.

Once the wire was installed, he found himself with concrete, highways, houses, buildings and he finally had to move his teepee. The song goes on for about three minutes, but I have to shorten it. However, I believe that it expressed a certain inescapable reality.

Many people have asked me, and I am sure that many of my colleagues in the Bloc have been asked the same question, Mr. Speaker, ''What will Quebec do about the native people?'' That is the wrong question. Not only is it the wrong question, but it is one which should not be asked in the first place.

First, we are not doing anything about the native people. If something is to be done, it will be done together, as equals. It is not up to us or anyone else to decide what must be done about native issues. This is a matter that must be negotiated and covered by agreements between equal nations. The question arises how this translates in Quebec and how our perspectives on the matter have developed since the sixties.

I may recall that on April 8, 1963, the Government of Quebec resumed contact, administratively speaking, with the aboriginal peoples within Quebec territory. Until then, the federal government's responsibility was paramount and it still is today. The Government of Quebec at the time established the *Ministère des richesses naturelles et de la Direction générale du Nouveau Québec*. Within New Quebec, the department was responsible, with the exception of those areas that were already administered by Quebec, for the administration of justice, provincial police services and the services of the department of lands and forests. At the time, the purpose was to develop natural resources.

Not until federal responsibility for community and municipal services was transferred to the province 17 years later, in February 1981, was the *direction générale du Nouveau Québec* able to start concentrating on education, although it had, as in 1963, stated its desire to respect the Inuit language and culture.

By the way, I would like to commend the hon. member for Nunatsiaq on using his mother tongue. I don't understand when he speaks in his own language, but we must realize that language communicates culture. When I speak French, I am able to express ideas in a certain way, and I would be unable to do so in English because language is a reflection of culture. When the hon. member speaks in his native tongue, we don't understand, and I think that is his message to us. We don't understand. And when we realize that we don't understand, perhaps then we will start showing respect, and he has my respect.

To continue this short history, in the early seventies, the federal government published a White Paper on native policy. Quebec established the *Commission de négociation des affaires indiennes*, whose purpose was to work together with the department of intergovernmental affairs and other departments involved in negotiations with the Confederation of Indians of Quebec, and with the federal department of Indian affairs and Northern Development regarding Quebec's responsibilities vis–à–vis the Indians of Quebec or Indian affairs.

(1725)

The *Commission de négociation des affaires indiennes* was also supposed to make recommendations on an integrated policy on Indian affairs and to propose measures to be taken in order to implement the policies concerning Indian affairs.

On November 11, 1975, the Quebec government signed the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement with the Crees and the Inuit. On January 31, 1978, it signed the Northeastern Quebec Agreement with the Naskapis of Quebec.

We were then facing a new reality in Quebec government departments: the aboriginal reality. And the whole of the Quebec policy on aboriginal people was summed up in two agreements only. Therefore, we had to give ourselves a more comprehensive policy; that is why on January 18, 1978, the *Secrétariat des activités gouvernementales en milieu amérindien et inuit* was created and the *Direction générale du Nouveau–Québec* and the *Bureau de coordination de l'entente* were abolished.

Then came the eighties. In January 1987, the secrétariat was given a new name, *Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones*, and its new mandate was to negotiate global agreements in co–operation with the various departments involved. Let me remind you that the preamble of the Charter of the French Language says that ''the National Assembly of Québec recognizes the right of the Amerinds and the Inuit of Québec, the first inhabitants of this land, to preserve and develop their original language and culture''.

And self–government is certainly the focus of discussions between aboriginal people and governments. It was the subject of four constitutional conferences held in Ottawa between 1983 and 1987. There again, they talked about the principle of the inherent right to self–government, but unfortunately that right was not entrenched in the Canadian Constitution. Natives have to get some political leverage if they want to really exercise that self–government because this is the way to their economic self–sufficiency.

Self–government means giving aboriginal people complete jurisdiction over health, education and social services they receive. It means giving them full jurisdiction also over the administration of justice, environment, public safety and land and forest management.

I would now like to present this House with some statistics that should give it some food for thought. It should interest as well those who are watching this debate at home.

In 1991, there were, in Quebec, 39,590 Indians living either on reserves, in establishments or on treaty lands, whereas 15,794 Indians lived off their reserves. On top of that, there were 6,400 Inuit living in northern settlements in the Hudson and Ungava Bay area.

We are therefore dealing with a native population of 61,754 according to the 1991 Census, which represents one per cent of the total population in Quebec. The lands set aside for them amount to 14,770 square kilometres. The main native peoples or nations are the Mohawks, with close to 16,000 members; the Montagnais, with more than 11,000; the Crees, with a little more than 10,000; and the Algonquins, with more than 6,000.

Nations vary in size from 242 for the Malecites to more than 15,000, very close to 16,000 for the Mohawks. Fifty per cent of these communities have less than 500 members. Their annual birth rate is 2.4 compared to 1.4 for other Quebecers. Seventy per cent of Indians living on reserves do not have a high school diploma. Their suicide rate is three times that of Quebecers. The native infant mortality rate is three and a half times higher than in the general population. Life expectancy for Indians on reserves is 8.6 years shorter than for the rest of the population. Indians account for 2.74 per cent of inmates.

Here are now a few statistics for Canada as a whole, again as food for thought. Twenty–five per cent of natives are unemployed, whereas Montreal, with 19 per cent, has the highest unemployment rate in the country.

(1730)

The average income is 33 per cent lower. The unemployment rate for native people on reserves is 33 per cent, and 16 per cent of natives say that their race is a barrier to employment, which proves that racism and discrimination are probably fairly prevalent.

In 1990, 13 per cent of native adults did not have any income, compared to 9 per cent for the general Canadian population. Only 5 per cent of natives had an income in excess of $40,000 in 1990, compared to 15 per cent among Canadians in general. Seventeen per cent had an income of less that $2,000 and 29 per cent were on welfare. Forty–two per cent of native welfare recipients lived on reserves.

The main problems encountered by natives are, in descending order of importance: chronic unemployment, alcoholism, family violence, suicide, sexual abuse, rape. Six per cent of natives have diabetes compared to two per cent in the general population, even though this disease was unknown among native people in the 1940s.

Forty–five per cent of Indians on reserves claim that their absence of mobility is a problem. Twenty per cent of native housing is in need of major repairs against eight per cent for all dwellings in Quebec. Ten per cent of native dwellings did not have toilets, less than half were heated with electricity. Nevertheless, the average rent was $410 in 1991.

Crib death among native infants is 4.7 times higher that the national rate, and deaths in the 15 to 44 age group resulting from drowning, fire, shooting and vehicle accidents, can often be linked to alcohol abuse. The suicide rate among young adults is 22 per 100,000, twice the national average.

The only way to give back their dignity to the First Nations is to treat them as equals. Nobody has a secret formula for reaching the results which must be obtained before the next century, but everyone should keep an open mind and a fair attitude. We could thus negotiate on an equal basis and come to suitable agreements like the one signed with the Dene, which is before us tonight.

[*English*]

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the Sahtu Dene for the very professional manner in which they have pursued this agreement and the help they have been to me and to others in trying to get a handle on this debate and exactly what is in the bill.

It is my view that in Bill C–16 the majority of what is written is innovative, imaginative and very worth while.

At the outset I want to point out that I will be raising some points while speaking about the bill. The intent is to make it better and to understand what we are talking about. This is probably one of the very first times that there has ever been a debate in the House of Commons over such an important issue. These issues come before the House and because they are politically sensitive or motherhood issues they never end up being debated honestly. It is this lack of honest, vigorous debate which may have allowed us to arrive in the position we are at today.

It is our job, our function, our responsibility not to automatically assume that everything the government presents is right and holy and good. Our job is to assume that everything the government presents is exactly the opposite.

An hon. member: And can be improved.

(1735)

Mr. McClelland: And can be improved. It is in that spirit I make my comments today and I know my hon. colleagues do as well.

We are all aware that Bill C–16 will pass eventually. It will pass intact or with moderate or very little change. The question then is this: Why am I and my colleagues so impassioned about this debate? That is the question. Why would we even bother?

The other question is: This is a debate of incredible importance, at least in our view, to the nation, and yet how much ink does it get? Where are the priorities in the nation? We are talking about the First Nations, the first people in our country. They have traditionally, we know and acknowledge, been the reci-

pients of something less than the kind of treatment of which we should be proud. Yet for the very first time it is being debated. Unfortunately it will probably get very little interest outside the House.

Why then do I think this is the most important speech I have given in the House thus far, and why do I care so deeply that what we do is right? It is because the relationship between the first people and the immigrants, that is all of us that they welcomed to this continent, has largely been one of paternalism, of manipulation, of neglect and of isolation.

We acknowledge that there are two sides to every story. While we—I am speaking essentially as a white person in this country—have not much to be proud about, neither do our native brothers have very much to be proud about either. We have to recognize that there are two sides to this story and responsibilities on both sides. We must accept responsibility, but so must the aboriginal people accept responsibility for their lot in life.

That is not to say there have not been examples of inspiration and achievement. But in general, especially on the prairies where I am from, we have nothing to be proud of. By using that as a starting point and as a base, what can we do, where do we go from here?

As in everything we have to recognize the situation as it is, not as we would wish it to be. We have to recognize both sides of the issue; those who will receive the benefits of this agreement, and also those who are going to be paying the bills. Because we are all, as it was mentioned earlier by an hon. colleague, and we have to make it work. If it is not good for both sides it will not be good for either.

Aboriginal Canadians comprise about 5 per cent of the population, and yet aboriginal Canadians are over–represented in every statistic that speaks to failure in our society and they are under represented in most statistics that represent success. This was so eloquently put across to all of us by the hon. member for Churchill when he talked about his experiences. We know this, it is not something we are debating at all.

How did this unholy circumstance happen? Did it happen by accident? I submit it did not. It happened because our forefathers chose not to accept the aboriginals as brother human beings, equal in every respect, in human rights and in dignity. Instead, aboriginal Canadians were treated as innocents, they were in need of the benevolent protection of the state. Aboriginal Canadians were herded on to reserves, isolated from the world, out of sight and out of mind. That has largely been the situation for many years, one of benevolent ignorance, ''let's not pay attention to it and it won't be a problem''.

It does not matter whether the intention was good or evil. The result today is the circumstance that aboriginal people largely endure, a circumstance in many respects no better than South Africa's discredited system of apartheid, so deservedly denounced in all the civilized world. Aas we debate today, free elections are under way in South Africa. Another nail is being driven into the coffin of the marginalization of indigenous peoples around the world. South Africans should and must be congratulated for this giant leap forward and that indeed is a giant leap forward for mankind.

(1740)

However, I must get back to Bill C–16, the comprehensive land claims settlement of the Sahtu Dene and Metis. How would the bill lead to a better way of life for those involved and will this settlement lead to self–sufficiency, pride, self–respect and self–confidence of the Sahtu Dene as a people? That is the question. If what we are talking about would lead to self–respect, pride, self–confidence and self–sufficiency, then it would be a very small price to pay. It is what we all want to achieve. It is where we want to be at the end of the day.

Unfortunately I think the answer is a qualified no. I do not know if it is going to achieve the noble objectives which are envisioned for it. While there are aspects of the bill my colleagues have already questioned, I need to point out that 16,000 square miles is an awful lot of land for just 2,200 people, not to mention $130 million over 15 years.

Why do the Sahtu Dene need so much land and why does the government pay them so much money, while at the same time they are still entitled to all the benefits all other status Indians have today or may receive in the future?

Sixteen thousand square miles is a lot of land. However keep in mind that over much of the year it is covered with ice and snow. Also keep in mind there really are not a whole lot of people up there and the traditional way of life for the Sahtu Dene is trapping, hunting and fishing. Not a whole lot of people are trying to get into that land either, except to explore and get at the resources and we still have that opportunity.

As I understand it the Sahtu Dene will be the custodians of the land. We should not make any mistake. The land will be theirs in fee simple. However, except for about 700 square miles all Canadians will have access, with permission where possible, provided they do not harm the land or destroy the environment.

We can look at the immense amount of land and look at the Sahtu Dene and Metis because there will not be any reserves. This is all settlement land. We can look at it as a big national park but the park rangers are the traditional inhabitants, the Sahtu Dene and Metis. While they will be getting the land in fee simple, they do not own the resources of the vast majority of the land. They own the resources of about 700 square miles. That is an important consideration.

However, if resources are found in any of that land, they will via royalties be able to participate in the profit. The money, $75 million to be paid out over 15 years, is intended to help develop a commercial infrastructure and is paid to the band council. With the money they can set up hunting lodges—if handguns or rifles are not banned—and with fishing and guiding try to get some tourist trade going.

The idea of the Sahtu Dene is to participate, to be doing something, rather than sitting back and for this they are to be recognized and congratulated.

The reality is that we, the Government of Canada, are going to pay out $75 million over 15 years. The money is not going to disappear. It will be recycled through the band to the community. I think that financial commitment may turn out to be a mistake and this is the primary reason why I have a problem with the bill. Remember it is in addition to any existing entitlements.

In my opinion the Sahtu Dene would be well served if their commercial activities had to undergo the same checks and balances as any other commercial venture anywhere else in Canada. The band council could consider a system of guarantees but the focus should be to develop entrepreneurs who would repay their stake and be accountable for use of the money. However the most important consideration is: Will the agreement lead to self–sufficiency? Will this get people off social assistance and into the mainstream of Canadian life?

(1745)

Unless the entrepreneurs in the Sahtu Dene nation have obligations, they are not going to be able to develop skills as entrepreneurs that will allow them to become part of mainstream life. All of us exist in a competitive society and we cannot take ourselves out of it. If we are going to get into business, we are into business. We cannot be half in and half out. Otherwise it will be a black hole in which we will be throwing more and more money.

I think, though, it could be but only if the land settlement and cash payment are one–time deals. That is why the agreement is so very important. In my opinion the agreement will set the stage for future agreements to be negotiated across the country in the months and years ahead.

Most Canadians want to do the right thing by our aboriginal brothers. Most Canadians feel a collective sense of embarrassment over the condition and situation of many aboriginal Canadians. We will not improve their situation by creating still more dependence and throwing still more money at the problem. Therefore this would be a much better agreement if the Sahtu Dene and Metis were to receive the benefit of the agreement or their traditional entitlements as agreed, but not both.

That is a fairly major change. They would receive the benefits of the agreement or their traditional entitlements, but not both. The way it is set up today, they would receive all their traditional benefits plus all the benefits that accrue to them under the agreement.

There are only 982 people to participate in this. How will that do anything to promote self–sufficiency? We must remember that when the settlement is done the Sahtu Dene will get the benefit of the royalties of resources on the land. Those royalties would today give them $200,000. How does anyone know what might be found there in the future?

By accepting this land settlement and the royalties that come with it as well as the cash settlements, the Sahtu Dene should also accept the same rights, freedoms and obligations of any other Canadian in any other part of the country. That is the only road that leads to self–sufficiency, self–respect and dignity.

Continued dependence generation after generation leads to exactly what we do not want whether the recipients are aboriginal or not. This settlement offers at the very minimum hope of a better future for the Sahtu Dene and Metis. I am concerned that the agreement sets a bad precedence because it does not regulate the use of the cash payment. The land settlement is absolutely enormous. It is not clear if there is a provision to make changes in the agreement if it is subsequently seen to be in need of correction. The agreement is entrenched in the Constitution under section 35 because the Sahtu Dene are already covered under treaty 11.

Another consideration has to be the implementation of aboriginal self–government. It is my opinion the Sahtu Dene will be responsible in implementing a combination of band council and municipal government. We have to face it that in this circumstance there are only about 2,800 people in the entire 16,000 square kilometres and they are mostly concentrated in a few communities.

Finally the agreement will be entrenched in the Constitution. Therefore I am of the opinion that the charter rights would prevail as the law of the land despite any future self–government negotiations.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke was a businessman in his previous life. Has he looked at the agreement from the standpoint of the new bureaucracy, how it would affect doing future business and how it would affect existing businesses within the settlement area?

(1750)

Mr. McClelland: Mr. Speaker, no, I have not looked at it carefully from that perspective. I contacted Mr. George Cleary, president of the Sahtu Tribal Council, and talked to him about this settlement. He seemed in conversation to be very concerned that whatever was done on both sides of the table be done right and be done in a responsible manner.

There are provisions in the agreement to set up an enormous level of bureaucracy. I believe there are seven, eight or as many as nine other bureaucracies. He was very clear in saying they understand the potential for problem there and would be very cautious to ensure that did not happen by perhaps having people wearing two or three different hats at one time.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my caucus colleague from Edmonton. I appreciate and understand his concern about the size of the grant of funds.

What about inherent self–government and how that will interface? Perhaps he has an idea of how inherent self–government could be negotiated on the reserves within this large land area and how that would interface with the laws of the rest of Canada. Does he see any potential conflicts there? Should this be negotiated now before we do the land settlements?

He talked about precedent. That is something they did not mention. I would like to know as a businessman how he would be negotiating this deal from that point of view.

Mr. McClelland: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that entirely unexpected question.

The implementation of self–government in this particular circumstance will be very different from the implementation of self–government in other circumstances. This is an enormous area with relatively few people who are by and large involved in a traditional lifestyle, with the exception that they particularly want to get more involved in oil and gas exploration. Self–government in this particular model would be one that would be more municipal; it is envisioned as being more municipal than it would be federal.

Something we would want to keep in mind in this whole self–government consideration is that if 5 per cent of Canadians are of aboriginal ancestry, and yet something like 40 or 50 per cent of Canadians in jail are of aboriginal ancestry, then somewhere along the line we have gone horribly wrong. If we need to make a leap of faith to try to right that wrong then it is incumbent on us to do exactly that.

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member make a distinction between land use control, oil and gas development and self–government as such? Does he see an intrinsic difference between them?

Obviously oil and gas development would not be compatible with the structure and powers of a municipal set of governments.

Mr. McClelland: Mr. Speaker, on the whole question of mineral exploration or exploration for anything the self–government model would have to go to a provincial model. In this particular case the people involved have indicated they would be flexible to do whatever is necessary and to do whatever is right. It is a learning process for everyone involved.

The important thing in the whole aspect of self–government as I envision it is not to replace one with another but is to say: ''Give us the opportunity to earn and to have our dignity by making our own laws. This is our land. We know our land. We know how to look after our land a lot better than you do. Give us the power to do so''.

I think particularly in this agreement the Sahtu Dene have not tried to say this was their land exclusively. It is very clearly laid out in the agreement that with the exception of about 700 kilometres it is open to anyone on permission. The caveat is not to destroy the environment or harm the land. In answer to the direct question it would not work as a municipal but it might be a combination of municipal and provincial. Who knows?

(1755)

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague's speech. He raised some questions that I might like to refer to and ask him one in return.

He asked: ''Is this agreement fair?'' If this agreement were arrived at by an equal number of participants who wanted to make an agreement that would stand and serve their interests, those of Canada and those of the aboriginal people, it is probably fair.

He said that 16,000 square kilometres was a whole lot of land. I agree but we do have a lot of land in the country. Then he said they were custodians. I suggest aboriginal people made less impression on this land in 36,000 years than we immigrants made in the past 200. In fact in the past 50 years we have done a pretty good job of changing the face of this land.

It might be a good thing to return some custodianship to those who believe that the land suckles us all and that it is here for our children and grandchildren and not for our exploitation.

He said that the Dene wanted to participate but that the money may turn out to be mistake. He asked: ''Will this agreement lead to self–sufficiency?'' All members of the House would like to say they hope very much that it will. Certainly what we have been doing up to now has not led to self–sufficiency. Maybe we had better try another approach to see whether it will work.

Mr. McClelland: Mr. Speaker, I did not really hear much of a question in the comments, but I would pretty much echo virtually everything he said. We are basically on the same wavelength.

Mr. Jake E. Hoeppner (Lisgar—Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I will admit that I am not an expert on native affairs, land claim settlements or treaties that were signed years ago. However because I am the only Reform member from Manitoba, and Manitoba being probably a model of self–government for the rest of Canada, I would like to point out a few things that could have some effect on self–government for Manitoba which are

kind of laid down in the guidelines in the Sahtu Dene and Metis bill.

Through the agreement the government, as far as I am concerned, has shirked the wider public interest in dealing with aboriginal land claims. North of 60, which is the Northwest Territories and Yukon, comprises 40 per cent of the land mass of Canada. Ownership up to now has been with the federal government, which should control it in the best interest of all Canadians. It would appear however that the government like the one before it is more concerned with being perceived as politically correct than it is in administering the land in the best interest of all.

The people in this part of the country have seen four major territorial agreements. There have been four massive land claim agreements since 1984. The Inuvialuit agreement covered the western Arctic. The Gwich'in agreement dealt with the Mackenzie River Delta and the Nunavut agreement covered the eastern Arctic. Now we have before us the Sahtu Dene and Metis agreement which covers the Great Bear Lake region. These agreements typically give vast amounts of land to a relatively small number of people. The land settlement agreement to Sahtu Dene and the Metis includes land equal to 28,000 square kilometres or about five times the area of Nova Scotia.

(1800)

There are, however, only about 1,755 beneficiaries. This works out to approximately 160 square kilometres per person, an area 10 kilometres by 16 kilometres per individual. If you take that into miles it is 6 by 10 miles which is 60 sections per individual, 36 sections in a township. Each individual will receive approximately two townships of property.

These agreements give generous concessions to the recipients, including the constitutionally entrenched rights for aboriginal fishing, trapping and hunting forever. If any outside group wants to use this area in the future for something like forestry or the development of oil and gas it would have to go through several complex layers of regulations including native negotiations. This could seriously deter any potential investors from setting up shop in these areas.

This bill will also provide cash payments of $130 million over 15 years. This works out to approximately $74,000 per person. Also included in this agreement is a percentage of resource royalties from any gas, oil and mineral development. No indication is given as to how much money this would include.

When combined with the agreements that preceded it we have an area of over half a million square kilometres. That is half the size of Ontario and it is granted to a population of 23,800 individuals. These actions have taken this land with its untold resources out of the hands of all Canadians and put it into the hands of a few.

This bill has special significance to me because I am the only Reform member of Parliament from Manitoba. The hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has indicated that Manitoba will be a test case for aboriginal self–government. I am very concerned that this Sahtu Dene and Metis agreement sets a precedent for future Manitoba agreements. Manitoba has a native population of about 84,000, four times the amount that these four agreements include.

I am not sure that this government can define everything that would be included in self–government but to put it in perspective, if the agreement that C–16 deals with is used as a model and the same concessions are eventually given to Manitoba's 84,000 natives, the government would have to agree to land claims of about 13.4 million square kilometres.

Since Manitoba covers about 650,000 square kilometres this is obviously impossible. This would mean that the federal government would have to purchase another 20 Manitobas somewhere to settle the land claims. Maybe this would be a way of selling my farm land which I am told is very valuable, although it is hard to get the money out of it.

Based on the funds that are given under the Sahtu Dene and Metis deal, about $6.2 billion is going to be handed over to the 84,000 Metis. Where will the federal government get that type of money to settle all the land claims? What is the figure eventually going to be for the rest of the native people in Canada?

One week after the Charlottetown accord referendum was defeated a leaked government document indicated that the government had few answers as to what self–government would entail. It had no idea of how much it would cost, where it would get the money or how many aboriginal groups would want to be a part of this.

I am simply not confident that this present government has a better grasp on these matters. Yet, through the Sahtu Dene and Metis agreement the government will enter into a future agreement for self–government.

(1805)

As I stated, the model for self–government is not clear. Thee is a reference in appendix B of the land claims settlement agreement for local law making on a range of powers that are normally exercised federally or provincially. I would hope that the government could assure Canadians that this does not mean a new legislative law making body would be set up with a new judicial system all for the benefit of fewer than 2,000 people.

As I mentioned, huge questions surround how Manitoba will become a testing ground for aboriginal self–government. The number of acres of land that will be set aside for Manitoba natives and the amount of money involved are two more of the

obvious questions, but there are no answers because they do not make sense in this agreement.

What will the related costs add up to, for example the cost of policing a judicial system? In appendix B of the Sahtu Dene and Metis agreement there is a framework that considers transferring not only administrative responsibilities but also legislative powers. The extent to which this applies in any self–government initiative remains to be determined in future negotiations.

This leads to a number of questions. Would this include a special and separate native police force? Who will be responsible for the hiring and training of such a police force? Who would be responsible for the incredible costs involved?

There is also the question of whether the Charter of Rights and Freedoms would apply to any self–government arrangement negotiated in accordance with this agreement. That is a question that is not answered in this agreement.

A very questionable aspect to this agreement is the additional layer of bureaucracy it creates to administer the land, the water, the resource and the wildlife provisions. Renewable resource councils will be established by each community. A renewable resource board will be created by the government. Sahtu Dene and Metis will make up half the membership on this board. An arbitration panel will be formed to settle disputes relating to this agreement without going to court. A land use planning board and a land and water board will each be set up, with 50 per cent membership for the Sahtu Dene and Metis.

There will also be an environmental impact review board and a surface rights board. Together with an expected act on the Mackenzie Valley resource management, this agreement will give rise to a whole new layer of bureaucracy.

Who will pay the salaries and expenses of the members on this new layer of government? Are we just training the Sahtu Dene and the Metis to become bureaucrats? Currently all of these functions are performed by either the department of Indian and northern affairs or the government of the Northwest Territories. I see no commitment to phase out these current boards. I wonder if they will continue to exist even though their jobs have been taken over by someone else.

The department of Indian affairs has a budget of about $5 billion and has a staff of 3,400 people. In this year's estimates salaries and contributions to employee plans amount to $134.4 million. This works out to an average salary of approximately $40,000. Will this department with a huge budget and a large staff continue to exist as we set up another bureaucracy?

This land of course will have roads, bridges and similar infrastructure that will have to be built and maintained. Presumably this will be the responsibility of the new native administration. Will it still be federal funds that will be applied for?

I think it is worth mentioning that health care under this agreement will remain unchanged. It will still be administered by the federal government. As I can expect that self–government will be introduced into Manitoba, this is of concern to my constituents. In the report to the Manitoba standing committee on medical manpower concerning the year 1991–92, I learned that the total health care service expenditure per capita for natives was much higher than for the rest of the province. In my own area of the province, which includes Morden and Steinbach, the average cost was about $140 per person. In Winnipeg it was about $200 per person. The Manitoba average was $185 but on the southern native reserve it was $260 per person. One doctor told me that half the people on the native reserve are afflicted with diabetes—how sad. It is of real concern to the other people in that area that these problems get corrected and how that will be accomplished.

(1810)

It is similar when we look at the average expenditure for each hospital visit. For towns like Winkler and Steinbach the cost was about $23 per visit which was about the same as the Winnipeg and Manitoba average, but for the reserve natives, the average cost was $50, more than twice as much.

Clearly this indicates that there are special health care requirements for Manitoba's native population. It is a social issue because we should be looking at ways to improve their overall health but it is also a financial issue and I think it is important to realize that these costs will remain after these land claims are settled.

Will there be any provision under self–government for natives to assume their own health care or will they depend on the federal system forever?

The government has also announced its commitment to continue the northern food mail program which I think is a very important program. This program will cost about $14.1 million in 1994–95. I think it is important for Canadians to realize that these programs continue even after these agreements have been achieved. The Canadian taxpayer's responsibility to fund these programs does not disappear just because natives are being given new land rights and more control over their affairs.

I wonder when the time comes for self–government in Manitoba what the government will do in the way of initiatives to improve the health of this segment of the population. I hope it will not ignore the problem and just agree to another wholesale giveaway of land and resources as it has done in the Sahtu Dene and Metis agreement.

I think it is very important that we realize that not just the Metis and the native people but the white are responsible to correct some of these problems and they have to be dealt with and there have to be funds for it. Huge land claims will not deal with these health problems.

In closing, I hope I have served to air some concerns and raise some very important questions regarding Bill C–16. The implications are very far reaching and it is very troubling that some of the more important questions seem to be without answers.

As a Manitoba member of Parliament I hope that when the time comes for any self–government or land claim agreement in my own province it is more well thought out than this one is. The current concept of self–government is so ill–defined and open minded there are serious implications to everyone involved, not the least of whom is the Canadian taxpayer.

A large percentage of native bands in Manitoba are millions of dollars in debt because of mismanagement and corruption. By moving toward self–government are we going to clear ourselves out of this indescribable mess created by Indian and Northern Affairs, or will it simply make the situation worse?

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, it always amazes me when members talk, as the previous speaker just did, about giving away land. It seems to me incredibly naive to say that the government gives away land. After all, I cannot describe well enough what has happened to the land that we now call crown land or Her Majesty's land or whatever the case may be.

(1815)

The member talks about the large size of the land that has been given. He compares it to how Manitoba would fare if it had a similar type of land claim in that regard.

We have to remember that the boundaries were not set down by the aboriginal people. As far as the aboriginal people are concerned those are artificial boundaries when they talk about their land.

The aboriginal people, the Dene and the Inuit of the Northwest Territories, the Denesuline from Manitoba and the people from Prince Albert did not sit down and say: ''Okay, here is Manitoba, here is Saskatchewan and here is the Northwest Territories''. It was imposed on them. As far as they were concerned they had some boundaries but not necessarily defined when they hunted and survived around that area.

When the member talks about how large the land is in ratio to if they tried to do that with Manitoba, that is not an applicable question.

The hon member talks about how self–government is undefined. I go back to a response I made some weeks ago about self–government.

When the British parliamentary system was being set up here who asked the aboriginal people of Canada? ''We are going to set up a government. We are going to set up the Parliament of Canada, but you do not have a choice. You are just going to have to go along with it''. That is basically what happened. We did not have a role in defining how the system of government was going to be set up in our land.

There has to be some understanding and I am sure the understanding is there. It is just being chosen to be ignored.

We talk about the bureaucracy which is going to be set up. In the Nunavut area I hope that the bureaucracy is going to be comprised of a large number of Inuit in our area. Hopefully the same will be true in the western Arctic, and there will be a large number of Dene within the bureaucracy.

In order to save time and money in dealing with issues we want a bureaucracy and a government sensitive to the people being served. After all the bureaucracy is there to serve the people. Even though sometimes the bureaucrats seem to think it is the other way around, that is the way it is supposed to be.

Does the hon. member not understand that this is setting up a system or settling claims which are long overdue? The hon. member asks whether the aboriginal people will be paying for their own medical care and so on. He talks about the food–mail program which he says is a good one and I agree. However that subsidy cannot be taken away from the people it presently serves when in large part those people have the least earning power.

(1820)

In some cases they are paying $4 for a loaf of bread, $4 for a dozen eggs, $5 for a litre of milk. They regard apples and oranges and other fruit as treats rather than a nutritional part of their diet.

Does the hon. member not think this is the settling of some claims which has been long overdue?

Mr. Hoeppner: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate those comments from the hon. member.

As I said, I am not that familiar with the history of the native people but when I read the history books, it seems to me the native people were immigrants at one time too. They did come to Canada from the Soviet Union across the Bering Strait. North America was settled to some extent by them. I do not know who was replaced.

I can also tell the hon. member that I stood on the ruins of Chichén Itza. That was a Mayan civilization which totally disappeared from North America before there was any white man around. It was because agriculture failed in that area.

I can also tell the hon. member that my forefathers came to this country and bought a quarter of land for $10. After 100 years and having cut down every tree to provide food for this nation, they have lost everything. I buried three of my neighbours who committed suicide just like the hon. member explains because the system we have today took away from them what they had worked for, just like their people have done.

This land has been given to us by our creator. We should use it for the benefit of all people. We cannot totally disengage ourselves from the kind of situation where we want to try to grab more for this person or more for that person.

We have to realize that problems were here before the white man came. I am just wondering what the natives would be like today if it had not been white men who defended these borders against the communist regime in the Soviet Union.

I had the opportunity to talk to some of the native people at Flin Flon or Pine Falls recently. I listened to their problems. We have made a lot of problems but we have also done some good for this country. I wish that was acknowledged once in a while.

Mr. Anawak: Mr. Speaker, I do not think we are here to debate hypothetical questions. That is a totally hypothetical question.

I suspect if Christopher Columbus had not come over, North America would be a lot more cleaner place to live. I would hate to think if not the aboriginal people but the people whose forefathers came first, what state of affairs the aboriginal people would be in. I cannot imagine the despair we would be in.

However I acknowledge what the hon. member has stated, that he is ignorant about the aboriginal issue. I accept part of his comments. Ignorance is bliss.

Mr. Hoeppner: Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering. Do we then say that our history books are full of lies and there is no truth in that when I read about the 1400s and 1500s of how native people in this area were fighting among themselves? Whole nations were wiped out. People starved to death because of famines. Is that all a myth? Did the white man create that in Europe before he was even here? Is our history that false? Should we rewrite our history books?

What would the hon. member suggest? Does the hon. member want to take the facts or do we want to work on as he said, hypothetical questions, solutions or answers? We have to be honest about this issue. We have to try to resolve that, not just for the native issues or their grievances but there are also grievances on the other side.

(1825)

I think if we want this country to survive we have to come to a realization that this is a joint problem and we have to work together to solve it or else we will destroy ourselves.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks of the land tenure system that has been put in place from the beginning with the earlier settlers, those who settled this land and stayed put versus what those settlers may have found here as a group of people not necessarily staying on the land, and did that actually help develop this country?

Mr. Hoeppner: Mr. Speaker, after hearing the hon. member speak, I do not know how to respond to that. I always thought that we as a people who developed a country should have some respect or some benefits from it.

My forefathers were driven from Prussia to the Soviet Union. They lost all their land and came over to Canada and started over again. Maybe it is just natural for us to be on the losing side all the time. Maybe it is the other side that should always win. I also have feelings and needs.

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, I would like to preface my comments by saying that there is a legitimacy about the comments that the Reform Party members are making in this debate.

I am honoured to be here. I am honoured to participate in this debate and express concerns and questions of my constituents.

Far too many aboriginal people struggle daily with the economic and social conditions that are overwhelming and tragic. Few Canadians would argue that their standard of living is acceptable. For far too long aboriginal people and the state of their affairs were out of sight of most Canadians. However, as Canadian people become increasingly aware of what life on reserves has meant in terms of humiliation and loss, there is a justifiable reaction. Let us remedy the situation. Let us make it right. There is a will for this to happen.

Some people are saying there is no way that we can move too quickly or do too much to remedy the unacceptable state of aboriginal affairs. I have heard non–aboriginal people in their enthusiasm and guilt say things like it is the white man's turn to live on the reserves with no vote and do what the department of Indian affairs tells him.

In my mind, however, what we must accomplish is somewhat less reactionary. I believe that what we should be doing is bringing down the barriers and co–operatively opening up the way for aboriginal people to come as far into the mainstream of Canadian life as they individually choose to come.

I have heard aboriginal people respond to this guilt of the white man. In very natural human terms aboriginal people are prepared to take whatever the government will give up; money, land, special rights. Aboriginal leaders are justifiably proud that they have learned how to get money out of the government, as one western chief described it. They have learned that in the present climate of political correctness the government has little if any will to deny aboriginal demands.

As an example of this the media reported recently that the minister of aboriginal affairs was handed a memorandum of understanding by Chief Phil Fontaine and after quickly reading the memorandum, without a word of clarification or consultation and to the surprise of everyone in the room, the minister took out his pen and signed it. All involved were so surprised at the minister's action, to quote the reporter, you could have heard a pin drop.

I see the Sahtu Dene and Metis comprehensive land claim agreement that we are debating today in much the same light; a willingness to give to the Sahtu Dene and Metis whatever is demanded. Once again there is a willingness to relinquish large tracts of land, water, surface and subsurface rights with little public consultation south of 60. There is also the unanswered question of the federal government's legal ability to enter into such an agreement without at least consulting the provincial governments.

(1830)

I am not suggesting that past wrongs and present day inequities should not be addressed. They must be addressed. But inasmuch as there are now no secrets about what happened on the reserves and in the residential schools, by the same token neither should there be any secrets about what the government of the day does behind closed doors.

So far the Sahtu Dene and Metis agreement has been made behind closed doors with little public consultation. When the facts become known, as surely they will, what will be the reaction of mainstream Canadians? They will feel they have been deceived by the government. Will their reaction stall and delay and even prevent the kind of programs that fair–minded aboriginals and non–aboriginals alike have been struggling to achieve? Will the reaction move against and stifle the agreement?

Bridges can and should be built between aboriginal and non–aboriginal people. These bridges need to be built for two–way traffic. Cultural enrichment can cross these bridges in both directions for the benefit of all Canadians.

In the mosaic of cultures that is being created in Canada, every culture can receive as well as contribute to the Canadian mosaic. I am not confusing this concept with that of the melting pot of cultures. What I am insisting on is that we have as an ultimate objective a unity within Canada that dynamically includes all cultures with no benefit or loss of benefit based on cultures—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Hindsight is 20–20, as we all know. I suppose that at 6.25 when the member for Cariboo—Chilcotin began his intervention I could have asked the House if it wished me to see the clock as being 6.30. However, I did not.

I wonder if there would be unanimous consent to allow the member to complete his intervention. We would not have questions or comments. Maybe the member could give us some indication of how much longer he would require because I hate to cut people off half way through.

I am in the hands of the House. The hon. member could help us possibly.

Mr. Mayfield: I would need about another 15 minutes to complete my intervention, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Would there be unanimous consent or should we go to the late show and the member will have to complete his intervention when we resume debate on the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I must proceed then to the orders of the House.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*Translation*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

MIL DAVIE SHIPBUILDING

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans): Mr. Speaker, on April 12, I informed the Speaker of the House that the Minister of Industry had still not recommended to the government to make decisions on two issues affecting the MIL Davie shipyard in Lauzon, namely the Magdalen Islands ferry and the multifunctional smart ship project.

I added that, if the government still believed in employment, it had no reason not to make an immediate decision on the future of this shipyard. I also informed the House that, with every passing day, government inaction threatened the survival of the biggest private business in the Quebec City region.

The employers, employees and people concerned are not at all satisfied with the answers then given by the Minister of Industry to these two questions. We cannot be satisfied with a stock answer such as the one we received. We agree that, as the custodian of public funds, the government must make decisions that are in the best interest of taxpayers, but it must still make them.

In the last election campaign, all local stakeholders told the parties now forming the government and the Opposition how important it was to react rapidly in the MIL Davie case because failure to do so could lead to economic disaster, namely the closure of the MIL Davie shipyard. The shipyard is now in a state of panic as no contract has been or is waiting to be signed.

(1835)

At this time last year, 3,000 employees were working. There are now 2,000 workers but this number will go down to 300 in December if the government does not assume its responsibilities right away.

As you can appreciate, people are ready to use any means to ensure their survival. They do not intend to wait for the provincial election to be called without the federal government taking a firm stand. All too often, campaigning politicians promised the shipyard it would be awarded contracts that never materialized after the election.

Today I am asking the Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry to give me a definite answer on the government position in this case, not on a whim but because the situation is serious and urgent. That is also the reason why, Mr. Speaker, you allowed me to address this House tonight pursuant to Standing Order 37(3).

People on both shores of the Quebec City region who work in the private sector are dependent on two major industries: pulp and paper and shipbuilding.

The pulp and paper industry is already facing serious difficulties in trying to apply certain federal environmental standards but, Mr. Speaker, if you allow me, I will bring this thorny problem to the attention of the House a little later.

The other industry supporting 3,000 employees has no contracts left and is about to close its doors. I would like the government to be aware of the major problems that would be created by its failure to take immediate action. Three thousand families represent about 10,000 people who will live on unemployment insurance for a while. The following year, these 10,000 people will be forced to live on welfare with all the psychological problems brought on by this situation. These psychological problems will lead to a significant increase in health–care costs paid in part by the federal government.

The government, I am sure, analyzed all these repercussions and I fervently hope that my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, is now in a position to give us the good news right now, namely that MIL Davie of Lauzon has been awarded the contract for building the Magdalen Islands ferry as well as the smart ship prototype so that it can survive for the next few years.

[*English*]

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry has asked me to comment on the issue raised by the hon. member for Beauport—Montmorency—Orleans on April 12 and I am sure he will get a clear answer as he requested.

The future of MIL Davie and its ability to generate meaningful long–term employment is of great importance to this government and I know how important it is for the population of the Quebec region.

With the completion later this year of the Canadian patrol frigate and trump contracts at MIL Davie the government will discuss the future of the shipyard with its owner, the province of Quebec. As a basis for the discussion, the province of Quebec is assessing a corporate business plan identifying the direction the company will take to ensure its future success.

I understand that the provincial government has not approved the draft plan and the MIL Davie business plan has not been presented to the federal government at this time.

Unsolicited proposals have been made by MIL Davie for two federal construction contracts. The first is a contract for the replacement of the *Lucy Maud Montgomery* ferry operating between the Magdalen Islands and P.E.I. The second is for a multifunctional vessel or smart ship for the Department of National Defence.

In the case of the ferry my colleague, the Minister of Transport, is evaluating the options available to him in the context of limited budget resources, other Canadian shipyards and the provision of timely and effective ferry service.

Regarding construction of the smart ship, the Minister of National Defence will be able to assess future naval requirements following the completion of the defence policy review that the member knows is going on at present.

In conclusion the long term future of MIL Davie and the well–being of its workers and the community is important to this government. As my colleague the Minister of Industry has said many times, we are committed to working with the yard's owner, the province of Quebec in a co–operative fashion.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BILINGUALISM

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf): On April 13 last, I had the opportunity to put two questions to the Prime Minister concerning bilingualism.

(1840)

Part of his response to one of the questions was as follows, and I quote:

> It seeks to protect its rights.

The Prime Minister was referring to Canada's francophone and Acadian community.

> However, it also deplores the fact that some francophones like the Parti Quebecois and Bloc Quebecois members are the ones who create the most serious problems for it.

Mr. Speaker, statements like this call for an apology or, at the very least, some serious explanations. Here is how I see these statements and why I find them exceedingly disagreeable. To begin with, the rights of Canada's francophone and Acadian communities are not dependent on Quebec. These communities enjoy them outright. They enjoy these rights because of what they are. Moreover, these rights are entrenched in the Constitution and in the Charter.

Whether Quebec is or is not part of the Canadian confederation does not take anything away from the fact that these rights are legitimately theirs. The Prime Minister seemed to be saying that, if Quebec were no longer around, either the Liberal government could not be counted on to ensure compliance with the Constitution or the Charter, or Canadians would not normally be inclined to uphold their Constitution and Charter.

Are we to understand then that the government wants to hold Quebec accountable for the future to which Canada's francophone and Acadian communities are entitled? Are we to understand that the government wants to hold Quebec accountable for the way in which other Canadians from coast to coast will treat their francophone and Acadian communities?

I hope that this was not what the Prime Minister was hinting at. Therefore, I think some explanations are in order. In short, either the Prime Minister, as Leader of the Liberal government, has no intention, in Quebec's absence, of ensuring compliance with the Constitution or, the Prime Minister believes that, in Quebec's absence, Canadians from coast to coast will not have the will, determination or sense of fair–play to ensure compliance with the Constitution and the Charter.

Which is it? Or should these words never have been spoken in the first place?

Not only am I waiting for an answer, Mr. Speaker, so too, I have no doubt, are tens of thousands of other people. There are 900,000 anglophones in Quebec and that province has never once said that it would treat them any other way but very fairly. There are 960,000 francophones in the rest of the country, 60,000 more than there are anglophones in Quebec, and they are waiting for an answer now.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that nearly a million francophones in Canada live outside Quebec and their number has increased by 50,000 since 1971. While the proportion of francophones outside Quebec has diminished during the same period, this is mainly due to the growing proportion of Canadians of diverse origins who came to our country during that period.

Nevertheless, the government recognizes the particular challenges facing francophones outside Quebec.

(1845)

The hon. member opposite uses statistics on the situation of francophone communities outside Quebec to make this House believe that these people will soon disappear and that their disappearance would end our policy on official languages throughout Canada.

[*English*]

French speaking Canadians living outside Quebec represent about 20 per cent of the total francophone population of Canada. Through government action there has been notable progress in recent years, particularly in terms of greater access in all provinces to French language schooling.

For example, there are now over 185,000 young Canadians in 700 French language elementary and secondary schools outside Quebec and in 45 colleges and universities which give instruction fully or partially in French.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member should keep in mind that a community's vitality is measured by its entrepreneurship spirit and its sense of identity and not only by statistics.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Jean–Guy Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, on March 25 last, I rose in this House to put a question to the Minister of Finance on the Sainte–Marguerite project.

At that time, all was set for construction to start, except that one permit was missing. It so happens that it was to be issued by the federal government. Already struggling with unemployment, the Sept–Îles region, in Quebec, was faced with job creation efforts being paralysed by the federal government's dilatoriness.

To a question as to when the federal government was going to allow Hydro–Québec to go ahead with this project, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport replied that the environment had to be protected. I agree. However, that is putting a bit too much on the back of the environment, seeing that the BAPE report was accepted on February 24. If the idea is to harmonize federal and provincial standards, why is the Quebec report not enough?

As for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, he took that opportunity to emphasize what a great achievement this agreement between his government and the Quebec government was. He explained that the permit in question was a complex and was detailed document and that a few more pieces of information were needed before it could be issued, indicating in passing that

the missing information was to be supplied by Quebec. In other words, it was Quebec's fault if the federal government could not issue the permit. So much for the great example of co–operation!

In the end, all that time was wasted for nothing because the government allowed construction to start without the famous permit. I am happy that it got under way so that the people from the Sept–Îles region can work. Let me elaborate on that. It is clear as day that the federal government allowed construction to start without permit just to score points with the electorate.

It is clear and it reeks of electioneering when the Prime Minister of Canada tells the Premier of Quebec that he does not need his authorization. This whole thing is clearly ridiculous. It is clear, in particular, that no one is falling for the little game the Premier and the Prime Minister are playing.

And they call this an excellent example of federal–provincial co–operation. The fact that the federal and provincial environmental standards are different has put a wrench in the works for Hydro–Quebec.

We get along fine on paper, but when the time comes to take positive action, we hit a wall. When well–intentioned people try to find out where the blockage is, the process gets so cumbersome that they can hardly find an answer. My point, Mr. Speaker, is that the Sainte–Marguerite project incident is proof, once again, that the federal system is dead. For the people of Quebec, there is one level of government too many and the sooner we get rid of that one the better. Then Quebec will be able to develop to its full potential because all the tools it needs will be in its hands alone and Quebec will be the master of its destiny.

[*English*]

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport has asked me to address the concerns expressed in the House over perceived delays in the granting of the necessary federal approval for Ste. Marguerite 3 hydro electric project.

The construction of the project requires a permit under the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which is administered by the Department of Transport.

The scope of the work required an environmental assessment. To that end the federal and provincial governments agreed to conduct a joint public panel.

On March 28, 1994 the Department of Transport, on behalf of the federal government, made public the federal response to the Bureau d'audiences publique sur l'environnement, BAPE, panel report.

The Department of Transport is moving expeditiously to complete its statutory responsibilities. Following the minister's February 24 announcement, departmental officials contacted the province and Hydro Quebec to explain the requirements for Navigable Waters Protection Act approval.

In order to finalize the approval documents the Department of Transport will have to receive and approve the final detailed plans and drawings of the project. In accordance with the Navigable Waters Protection Act, Hydro Quebec must deposit these plans in a land registry office and advertise their project intentions in two local newspapers and the *Canada Gazette* and await 30 days prior to commencing any work which may interfere with navigation.

To close, Hydro Quebec can and has, I believe, begun the road work for the project. There is certainly work that is not associated with the Navigable Waters Protection Act process with which they can proceed. Contrary to the comments of the hon. member for Frontenac, I believe the government commitment to both the protection of the environment and to job creation have been met.

I might also remind the hon. member that not long ago the United Nations declared Canada the number one place on the planet where to live, measured against certain criteria and thanks to the co–operation of all provinces, territories and the federal government. He should take that to bed and sleep on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Pursuant to Standing Order 38(5), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.52 p.m.)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Monday, April 25, 1994

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Sahtu Dene and Metis Land Claim Settlement Act

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Transportation

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Electronic Highway

Health Care

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Tobacco Products

Drinking Water

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

Bilingualism