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Speaker: The Hon. Richard Nerysoo, M.L.A.

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1990

MEMBERS PRESENT

Hon. Titus Allooloo, Mr. Arlooktoo, Hon. Michael Ballantyne, Hon. Tom Butters, Hon. Nellie Cournoyea, Mr. Crow, Mr. Ernerk, Mr. Gargan, Hon. Stephen Kakwi, Mr. Lewis, Hon. Jeannie Marie-Jewell, Hon. Richard Nerysoo, Mr. Ningark, Hon. Dennis Patterson, Mr. Pedersen, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Pudluk, Mr. Sibbeston, Mr. Whitford, Hon. Gordon Wray, Mr. Zoe

ITEM 1: PRAYER

---Prayer

Speaker's Ruling

SPEAKER (Hon. Richard Nerysoo): Before proceeding with the orders of the day I wish to provide to the House my ruling on the point of privilege raised yesterday by the honourable Member for Kitikmeot West. The honourable Member raised his point of privilege immediately after Bill 1-90(1), An Act to Amend the Evidence Act, had received first reading. Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, 6th Edition, describes the privileges of parliament as "rights which are 'absolutely necessary for the due execution of its power'". It cannot carry on without them. To constitute privilege, generally, there must be some improper obstruction to the Member in performing his parliamentary work in either a direct or constructive way.

Upon reviewing Hansard, the honourable Member's point of privilege was, and I quote, "...I feel that my privilege in this House and my ability to function effectively as a Member of this House is being offended when I am asked to approve, by enactment, anything which I do not understand."

The responsibility of the Chair is to rule if there is a prima facie case of privilege. As Members are aware, I permitted debate to determine whether or not this was the case. I find that the honourable Member for Kitikmeot West's privileges as a Member have in no way been obstructed by the fact that Bill 1-90(1) has been presented to the House in more than one language. The bill was presented in a manner that did not prevent the honourable Member from carrying out his parliamentary responsibilities. The Chair is also of the opinion that questions of accuracy of translation are the responsibility of the government. Therefore, I rule that the Member does not have a point of privilege.

During the debate on this point of privilege many Members raised the issue of the use of aboriginal languages in this House. The Chair noted the compassion with which Members expressed their desire to support and protect the languages of the aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories. This compassion, however difficult, is necessary when this House deals with an issue that can be so divisive and passionate. However, it is also important that we deal with an issue of this type with great care and consideration to ensure positive long-term benefits for the people of the Northwest Territories, aboriginal and non-aboriginal people alike.

As you are aware, a special committee of this House is presently reviewing this matter. I, along with other Members, am confident that their findings and recommendations will address many of the concerns raised here yesterday. Thank you very much.

Ministers' statements. The honourable Member for Iqaluit.

Motion To Adjourn The House

HON. DENNIS PATTERSON: Mr. Speaker, in light of your

ruling and the sensitive and critical nature of this issue, and all Members' desire to come to some clear and acceptable strategy to deal with the matters before us with respect to languages in the Northwest Territories, I wish, under Rule 29, to move that we adjourn in order to discuss this matter in caucus.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. If I might beg the indulgence of the House to ask a question of the mover. Is it to adjourn the House for the day or is it to adjourn the House for a period of time? The honourable Member for Iqaluit.

HON. DENNIS PATTERSON: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the Rules would allow but I would anticipate that should we reach a conclusion on this matter, we should resume sitting in a reasonable period of time; I would suggest an hour.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, with the greatest of respect to the honourable Member for Iqaluit, the motion that you have raised is improperly put at the wrong time; first of all because Ministers' statements are not the place in which you raise a motion of adjournment or any motion whatsoever.

If I could just beg the indulgence of the House for a moment. Sorry, that was incorrect. A motion to adjourn is always in order. However, I must indicate to the honourable Member that when we adjourn the House without a time period, we are adjourning until the next sitting day.

I require a seconder to the motion. The honourable Member for Sahtu is seconding the motion to adjourn the House.

MR. LEWIS: Point of privilege.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of privilege. The honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. LEWIS: Mr. Speaker, I believe that my privileges as a sitting Member of this House are being impinged upon because on Wednesday, when we normally had a formal session, this time we actually got into the business of the House because there is so much to do.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear!

MR. LEWIS: And as a representative of the centre of this city, I believe that we should not be doing our work behind closed doors all the time; we should be doing it here in this chamber.

MR. SPEAKER: To the honourable Member, that is not a point of privilege. It might be a point of grievance but certainly not a point of privilege. I have a motion on the floor to adjourn. I have a seconder. All those in favour of adjournment? The honourable Member for Nahendeh.

MR. SIBBESTON: Mr. Speaker, just to the motion made by the Government Leader. I take it that most Members are prepared to adjourn for a brief period but I think people are concerned that we do not adjourn necessarily to the next day. All things are possible with unanimous consent so I wonder if it is possible to simply adjourn for a period of time and then...

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me. Order. A motion to adjourn is not a motion that is debatable.

HON. GORDON WRAY: Point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Member for Kivallivik.

Point Of Order

HON. GORDON WRAY: Mr. Speaker, begging your indulgence, I wonder if you could advise the House as to how it is possible for us to recess for a short period of time and come back into sitting. Could you advise us? I think the problem here is that some of us are unclear about the Rules and how we can achieve that. The motion is an attempt to do that but if it is the wrong way, could you advise us on the proper way to do it?

MR. SPEAKER: If I might recommend that the mover should have suggested a time period for adjournment, indicating for instance, "I move, for a period of adjournment for one hour." That would have been the appropriate way to adjourn the House. Unfortunately the mover suggested the motion in the context of, "I move that this House adjourn." There was no time period in which that particular motion was introduced.

Motion To Adjourn The House, Withdrawn

HON. DENNIS PATTERSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to withdraw my motion of adjournment.

Motion To Adjourn The House Until The Call Of The Chair, Carried

With your indulgence, may I move, under Rule 29, that the Assembly be adjourned to resume at the call of the Chair. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there a seconder to the motion? The honourable Member for Slave River. All those in favour?

MR. ERNERK: Point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order. The honourable Member for Aivilik. Sorry. I had already called the question. All those in favour? Opposed, if any? The motion is carried.

--Carried

This House stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

--ADJOURNMENT

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I would like to call the House back to order. Prior to proceeding with the business of the House, I would like to introduce some honoured guests here today. Beth Phinney, Member of Parliament for Hamilton-Mountain; the Hon. Charles Caccia, Member of Parliament for Davenport; the Member of Parliament for Nunatsiak, Jack Anawak; the Member of Parliament for the Western Arctic, Ethel Blondin.

--Applause

The honourable Member for Kivallivik.

Unanimous Consent Requested To Waive House Rules

HON. GORDON WRAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to waive our Rules and precedents to stand down the orders of the day and immediately move into committee of the whole for an emergency debate on the use of French and aboriginal

languages in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is requesting unanimous consent to waive the Rules and precedents to stand down the orders of the day and immediately move into committee of the whole for an emergency debate on the use of French and aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories. Are there any nays?

--Agreed

The Member has unanimous consent to proceed with emergency debate in committee of the whole with Mr. Zoe in the Chair.

ITEM 17: CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS

Use Of French And Aboriginal Languages In NWT

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Zoe): I call the committee to order. This emergency debate is on the use of French and aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories. Which Member would like to start off the debate? Member for Kivallivik, Mr. Wray.

HON. GORDON WRAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be brief, but I would like to try and home the debate in on what the real issues are. The subject of language, as we see today in the country, is a subject that can become deeply divisive and is a subject that reaches down and brings out the raw emotions of most people. I think we have to be extremely careful when we are debating not to be seen to be trying to take away the rights of some to give to others. I do not think that is the question.

To my mind, there are two major problems that we have to deal with in the NWT and two reasons why we are so deeply concerned and why we are divided on this issue. First of all, I do not have a problem with the use of French. My problem in terms of the French issue is the fact that Ottawa has imposed conditions upon us and conditions upon our laws that they have not imposed on any province, and that they have removed the legitimate right of the Legislature of the NWT to make and enact laws on behalf of the people of the NWT. Now that goes back to the amendments that the federal government made to the NWT Act which prohibit us from doing anything with our Official Languages Act without their consent. In other words if we moved to amend our Official Languages Act to perhaps lessen what we are doing for legitimate reasons, we cannot do it.

Imposition Of Conditions By Ottawa

So I think the first issue we have to deal with is the imposition by Ottawa of those conditions upon us. And I think, quite frankly, that Ottawa and Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Bourassa have caused these problems across the country, and now we are seeing the results of imposition of attitudes as opposed to an education of people about attitudes and allowing people to come, in their own minds, to decisions based on what is good.

The second point, and maybe the more emotional point, is that the federal government has refused to officially recognize aboriginal languages in the NWT. We are unlike any other jurisdiction in the country, and perhaps this is why Northerners have such a deep dislike of Meech Lake, because within Meech Lake we talk about a distinct society for one province in the country and yet in the North, when we look south, to us there is no more distinct society in Canada than the Northwest Territories. We have things up here that nobody else has and one of the things that we have is that a majority of our people do not speak either English or French. The majority of our

people are aboriginal and a majority of our people speak aboriginal languages.

Aboriginal Languages Not Imported

Now these were not imported languages like English or French. These were not languages brought to these shores by immigrants 200 or 300 years ago. These are languages that have existed for the last 10,000 years in this country and yet we still cannot get recognition by the federal government on the use of aboriginal languages for federal services. If you go into a post office in the NWT, if you get letters from the federal government, if you get on an airline and you are an aboriginal person, you cannot see, hear or speak your language. I have had many occasions where people in my constituency, which is 85 per cent unilingual, Inuktitut, have had money taken out of their bank accounts by the Income Tax Department and they did not know why, because a letter was sent in English and French and they could not understand it. You go into a post office in my constituency, you cannot get service in the aboriginal language which is used by the majority of people in that area. The federal government has refused to recognize aboriginal languages.

For the people that I represent, their question, and it is a legitimate question, is: Okay, you want to impose French upon us because you recognize it as an official language of this country, why can you not recognize our languages? What can be more official than a language that has existed on these shores and in this country for 10,000 years? Why can we not get the same service from the federal government as French people, as English-speaking people? What is it about our language that prevents that?

So I think we have to zero the debate in on the problem of, for whatever reason, the federal government's failure to recognize aboriginal languages in the North as official languages, where those people are in the majority. It is not as if we are talking about 100 aboriginal people, we are talking about the majority of people in our jurisdiction being aboriginal.

So there are two debates that must take place. One is the imposition of French and the second debate is the failure of the federal government to move toward recognition of aboriginal languages, which to us are the most important languages in the North because they are the languages that our people work in and the languages that our people communicate in on a daily basis. It is not something that is cute or forgotten. These are living, working languages where the majority of our people speak them.

Status Of Aboriginal Languages Is Major Concern

I would like to perhaps move in terms of my thoughts on this matter that those are the two issues that we should deal with. I do not think, at least on my part, that there are any problems with the use of French. If we say we want the aboriginal people's languages to be respected then we have to respect other people's languages as well. The problem is that in these debates it can be very easily construed as being anti-French or unwillingness to go along with French. That is not the case. The case here is aboriginal languages and their status. Until the federal government gives official status and official recognition to aboriginal languages then this Legislature and the people in the North are going to have a very difficult time accepting English and French as official languages; because to us they are all one and the same. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Zoe): Mahsi cho. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. SIBBESTON: Mr. Chairman, (Translation) I would like to

make my statement in my language. When I first started in the 1970s the Legislative Assembly was called Territorial Council. I was here at that time representing the Fort Simpson area. In those days it was hard to speak for the Dene people. At that time the government was not really representing the people. It was more or less governed from Ottawa. In those days it was very difficult and the government was not really representing the people. Since then things have changed for the better. At that time it was hard to really oppose some of the things that were imposed upon us. At that time Commissioner Hodgson was more or less running the show in the NWT. At that time you could not speak your own language in the Legislative Assembly. Also the Inuit representatives could not speak their language in the Legislative Assembly. But things have changed for the better since. I feel that we have made some great progress; in regards to using the language we have made some progress. We are talking about the language of French and also the aboriginal languages. Now I would like to say something in English. (Translation ends)

Progress Has Been Made Since 1970s

Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to say in English too, that we have come a long way in the North since the 1970s when I first entered the Territorial Council. In those days it was quite a scary experience for a native person to come into the Territorial Council and try to speak on behalf of the people. In the early 1970s the federal government, in many ways, was very dominant in the North. They controlled the government; they controlled the Territorial Council; they controlled all aspects of life; people's lives in the North. Over the course of 20 years we have made a tremendous amount of progress in the North here. Some of these changes have been by, not violent means, but pounding-the-table-type means. I have always been one that said, from my own experience, that nothing gets changed by writing nice letters or talking quietly to one another. Changes happen by confrontation; changes happen by being vehemently opposed to certain things and stating it in a very strong way. That is the way that changes get made.

Today, Mr. Chairman, we are faced with an issue here, whereas the topic is aboriginal languages and French, to me the matter of aboriginal languages is somewhat in hand in terms of our Legislative Assembly and our territorial government. We have an Official Languages Act which at the moment relegates aboriginal languages to second-class rate. Over the course of a few months Members have seen that this is unfair so there is now a committee, a process in place to make the changes so that the Official Languages Act will be changed to make aboriginal languages just as official as French and English. That is a tremendously big step for the people of the North. It will be a victory for the true people of the North.

So in my view as far as aboriginal languages in our government and our Assembly, it is more or less in hand. The bigger issue to me today is the matter of French. The fact that we are suddenly faced in our Assembly with all our documents, anything that ever emanates and comes out of this Assembly must now be in English and French. I do not mind English because people of the North are used to English. Over the course of years I have learned English. It is my third language. Slavey, French and English. English is my third language but I have learned to speak it a little bit and I have accepted the reality. If I had it my truly ideal way, the only thing I would love to hear in the North, for our part of the North, is Slavey. This way the people's language and culture, and we as a people, would be guaranteed survival. But I am realistic enough to know that the world is just not going to bow and give in to the Dene-speaking people. We have English and it is very strong in our TV and daily world

and walk of life, and in government everybody speaks English. So I have accepted that English is here to stay.

French Not Reality In The North

But I am not so sure that French is a reality in the North as yet. And this is what I react vehemently to. We are faced today and in the next few days with the prospect of having French as an official language in our Assembly, meaning that all legislation, all pieces of paper that we ever get in this Assembly will have to be in French and English, if you read section 11 of our Official Languages Act. It states that all records, journals and so forth that emanate from the Assembly will have to be in French and English. And I react to that because it is impractical. It does not make sense to have this happen to us as people of the North.

The federal government has come a long way in granting democracy to the people of the North. We have evolved to the point where we have responsible government and we have pretty well a free hand in terms of doing what we wish, in terms of passing what legislation we want and saying what we want and setting the policies and setting up programs and so forth. So democracy has arrived to the people of the North. But the federal government, in giving us this democracy, has made French and English the official languages of the North and they have imposed that on us. I think really it is most unfair for the federal government to do that. The federal government has a responsibility and interest in having Canada bilingual and in certain parts of Canada, some of the provinces have adopted French and English. There are some bilingual provinces: New Brunswick, Quebec and Manitoba, I believe. But in the North, where there is a majority of native people, they have imposed French on us and I think that is most unfair.

Repeal Of Official Languages Act Urged

We are at a juncture today, ladies and gentlemen, in terms of our Assembly, regarding whether we put up with that, whether we accept that as a fact of life and something that we cannot do anything about or whether we can stand up and defy the federal government. I am saying to you today, in the course of the next few weeks, let us repeal the Official Languages Act. Let us amend it so that the only official languages in the North are English and the seven aboriginal languages in the North. Let us do away with French, just as a matter of practicality, because nobody in the North understands French. There is just a handful in my own constituency; there are less than five per cent French-speaking people in the North and for the federal government to do this to us is most unfair and is really an intrusion and squashing of our rights as Assembly Members.

So in the next few days or weeks I think Members will see that the aboriginal languages committee has done good work and you will eventually see amendments brought to the Assembly which I think will be pleasing to most of the people. So aboriginal rights will be taken care of, but we still have the thorny and unfair matter of the French language. This is something that we need to deal with. We have a number of issues that as an Assembly and as this government we have to deal with. While we can make amendments to the Official Languages Act, we still need money for its implementation and its nurture, as it were. We have limited funds of our own. Eventually we may have to go to the federal government for moneys and this is something that is yet before us.

I know the stand that I take is, in some respects, a hard-line one in suggesting that we do away with French, but I can be reasonable in the sense that if aboriginal languages are dealt with, if we have them in our own act, if I see that the government is serious about implementing the provisions in

the languages act dealing with aboriginal rights, I can perhaps modify my point of view and accept French. I would say at this juncture that I am a bit pessimistic; I am not very optimistic that the federal government will give us the moneys that are necessary. I know a number of years ago I went to Ottawa when we were faced with the provisions in the Official Languages Act kicking in, making French an official language. I went to Ottawa and was able to persuade the government to set back French for a number of years, and I think that is a matter that this government should seriously consider. This government should see that people are not happy that aboriginal languages are not in place as yet, so they should have that as one of their options -- to go to Ottawa and deal with the federal government with a view to setting back French three or five or 10 years with a view to giving time so that aboriginal languages can be put in place and be nurtured over the course of the next few years.

French Imposed On The North

The other aspect that really does often irritate me is the point that Mr. Wray raised. The federal government has imposed French on us. I ask, what has the federal government done in the North to promote aboriginal languages? In my view, they have done nothing. The federal government is the government that used to be in the North a long time ago. Generally they are insensitive. It is only since the people of the North and the territorial government have taken over that things have improved for native people. If we were still governed by the federal government, we would never have made the advances that we have made. I find the federal government generally insensitive. They do not care. They are more interested in bringing in people from the South than hiring and training people from the North. The federal government is at fault here.

On this issue, we should be very conscious and see what we can do to get the federal government to deal seriously with aboriginal languages and rights here in the North. If you go to the post office, can you get service in an aboriginal language? If you go to the federal government offices, can you get service in an aboriginal language? The answer is no. Do they hire native people? They generally do not, not as well as our government has. I say that the federal government is not sensitive; they have not done very much for native people of the North; they have not hired people; they have certainly taken no steps to support aboriginal languages in the North in a real way in their federal institutions. I do think that at this time, at this debate, inasmuch as certain things, positive things, can be done with aboriginal languages here in the North, the federal government on that point has to be challenged to do much more than what they have been doing.

Mr. Chairman, I am glad that I have had an opportunity to express my views on this, and I just hope that we can be very bold. One can argue that the federal government imposed this on us and we have received \$16 million out of the deal for aboriginal languages, and we have an act that we voluntarily passed. I say on this point that that was a few years ago. Just the fact that we have done that does not mean that we cannot change our mind. People change their minds -- if things do not happen exactly like you think they were going to, you can change your mind. I think the option is there for us, Mr. Chairman, to rescind, to amend the Official Languages Act to do away with the French provisions because it is not practical in the North. It does not have any support in the North and really is an imposition on the people of the North. So we should be bold and take that step.

Northerners Have Choice Of Vote

It is insignificant now that there are people in parts of the

world that do not have democracy, that have no choice, that have impositions on them. There are no provisions for ability of debate, different points of view, and so forth. The federal government is powerful; they have the money; they have their laws, and so forth; but the one thing that people in the North have won is the right to vote and I say that the federal government cannot make me vote for bills that come into this House in French and English. The federal government cannot force me. We as MLAs have that freedom and have that power. I think at this juncture in our life and in our history as MLAs and as an evolving government, we have a chance and choice to say no to French in our Assembly. If we let it go, it means we are stuck with it. It means we are going to accept it for the rest of our lives and likely for the rest of the history of the North. And we have a chance today, in the next few days, to say no to that, that we are in control and that we are not going to stand for imposition and will exercise our democratic free vote. I think the issue is as big as that, as to whether we are big enough and strong enough and daring enough to stand up to the federal government. I urge people to be bold and strong and to stand up for themselves, stand up for the aboriginal people so the aboriginal languages and cultures can survive into the far future. That, to me, is the issue. Mahsi cho.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Zoe): Mahsi cho. Any other comments? Mr. Arlooktoo.

MR. ARLOOKTOO: (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Even in the House we have difficulty using our aboriginal languages. I am a unilingual person myself and I only speak Inuktitut. The majority of the Members are aboriginal people and we are in full support of our aboriginal languages to be recognized in our constituencies. I am not against the French and English languages but I fully support our aboriginal languages being recognized officially. I do not think I have the capacity to have the French and English languages not recognized. I believe that the French language issue could be the basis for the GNWT to approach the federal government on the condition that our native languages be recognized within the NWT. In this way we can negotiate or make agreement with the federal government on this issue. I think we could rectify this problem that we are incurring.

All the Members know here that the majority of the people in the NWT are native. Most of the Northerners use their own aboriginal languages. It is the working language in the schools and other institutions. I believe that our aboriginal languages should be included in the Official Languages Act. My comments are brief but I would like to have that as a mandate of the GNWT, to have our native languages recognized within the NWT.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Zoe): Mahsi cho. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. LEWIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have talked to several people today from different parts of the country who are interested in this debate because language has been an interest of mine practically all my life. I have spent a long time dealing with language questions. The fear I have, and I have told people this, is that I would not want people to think that the debate that is going on here today is in any way related to the mood of intolerance that is sweeping across the country, Mr. Chairman. We find that the debates that are going on across Canada are very, very bothersome. In fact, today's Globe and Mail points out that since the signing of the Meech Lake Accord in June 1987, Saskatchewan abolished the century old rights of the French language minority, with Alberta following a couple of months later. In December 1988, Quebec suspended both the Canadian and its own Charter of Rights to forbid the use of English on signs. I will not go through all the list of things, Mr. Chairman, but it is to give

you the picture that what is going on in this country right now is very different from what we saw going on in the 1960s when there was some dream that perhaps a nation could be built in which six million people could feel at home in the capital, in Ottawa; that they could go there and feel that was part of their country, part of their life, and that they could go anywhere else in Canada and feel at home too and feel welcome, to be part of the Confederation that is, at the moment, breaking apart.

Dream Of Creating A Bilingual Country

If you look at all the evidence, it is breaking apart mainly because that dream of trying to create a new reality, because we were not a bilingual country. We had French speakers right across the provinces, but the bulk of people were in Quebec and some in New Brunswick. So that dream that was built up in the 1960s of trying to get everyone to feel at home in Confederation is slowly beginning to fall apart.

I would hate to think that this small Legislature of ours would be cast in the light of intolerance and not understanding the big picture, that we are not smart enough to know what is going on, that we have our own problems to deal with and do not care about anybody else's. We are a part of Canada too and we would like to be a bigger part of it. Perhaps if we were a bigger part and we did have the same kind of constitutional guarantees that other provinces have, we could show the rest of the country what we are made of. I would hate to think that anything that we would have today would be seen in any way intolerant, that we do not understand the bigger picture, the bigger things that are going on in Canada.

On the other hand we have a responsibility to tell the rest of Canadians, too, a few things, some of the misunderstandings that they have about the aspirations of the original peoples of this country, and we can only do that as long as we can continue to communicate with each other and not to sort of build walls and behave in such a way that we cannot see the other person's point of view.

This debate could go on, I am sure Mr. Chairman, for a long, long time, on the terrible injustices that were done in 1984. At that time we had an outgoing Liberal government and they had very little to show for all the work that has been done to hold this country together, in those last years of the Trudeau era. I suppose, maybe out of desperation, they decided that they would impose it on the Yukon and the Territories, simply to show at least that something was happening, because an awful lot had not been achieved technically everywhere else. I think it was a terrible mistake. I was involved, in fact, and I will not go into the details of it in this House today, but I was very, very closely involved in it, and certainly felt that imposing something like this showed a very, very low level of understanding by the people at that time in the kinds of problems that we were trying to face ourselves in the NWT with a very diverse population, many languages, many cultures, to try to move toward responsible government. This I saw as eventually being very divisive, not because the federal government was doing anything terribly wrong, but what they were trying to do, in my opinion, was to once again assert that the federal government knows best for the NWT. This is going to be good. And they really never took it far enough to see what the impact would be on us years down the road.

The regrettable thing, from my point of view, is that there are people here that have now reached the level of understanding throughout our Territories, where we can solve our own problems and could develop much as the aboriginal languages committee is doing currently, to develop some kind of plan so that the various languages in the NWT can be working languages, so that we could feel comfortable working

with government and with all the agencies and our society would feel much better about itself because of the way it was being served. It is just unfortunate that that historic position is still with us today and it is also unfortunate that we are almost trying to force the government to try to break its law, if you like, by not passing bills, not on the substance of the bill but maybe perhaps simply because it is in one of the languages that we do not understand.

A Practical Approach Must Be Taken

Mr. Chairman, the solution, I suppose, is to see if we cannot make some headway on the report of the committee, but I would warn the Members once we get to debate in much greater detail the whole idea of what official bilingualism is, that we do not get carried away. To have nine official languages, as I understand what official languages really means, could be a tremendous burden unless we take a very practical approach.

If I were a native person born and bred in the NWT, I would fall on my knees every day, not because I have anything against any other particular colonizing force, but to thank the good Lord that at least we are part of an English-speaking and French-speaking world, because they have developed a system of law and so on that has served as a model of how you can, in fact, use language to enshrine what people want to do in a very clear way. When you make something official, you are using languages which have been used for that purpose for over a thousand years; where the language is so precise in using legal and technical terms and so on that you know that you can have some faith that that means that. We still have lawyers arguing all over the place on arcane, difficult issues, but as far as the languages of law are concerned, I would be very very careful in trying to insist that just as English -- I will just use English as an example -- is being used to do this particular technical job, that you will insist that everything else be done in the same way.

In my opinion -- and I was involved with Raymond Gagne when the original orthography was being developed in the late 1950s or 1960s -- we are still at the stage, still working at developing the aboriginal languages of the Territories, where they are so precise -- and it takes very often hundreds of years to do that over a period of time -- so precise that they can sit in law, and the courts can deal with it and they are very explicit. Each language, in my opinion, is capable of doing that. It is not a question of one language being better than another language. When you use a language for the purpose of law, over hundreds of years it develops a degree of precision that makes it workable for certain purposes. I would caution all our Assembly to insist that all the aboriginal languages of the Northwest Territories can suddenly, just like that, overnight, with no real history of using them for law-making purposes -- I mean now the written law, the statutes and all the instruments of law -- that those can achieve that overnight. It very often takes hundreds of years to develop the precision that you want to achieve your purposes.

I would suggest, with not too much concern, Mr. Chairman, of offending people, that aboriginal people who are continually dealing with this problem would agree that we are still working on that, working on developing our languages to do exactly what we want them to do so that the people in the Kitikmeot, the Keewatin and the Baffin do not have disagreements and misunderstandings because they have the instruments under the law that will achieve exactly what they want them to do.

However, having said that, I believe that the aboriginal languages that this Assembly is going to take seriously, and has done so since I can remember -- in fact there has been a great interest over at least the last dozen years -- and I think that as working languages, you just have to turn on your radio

and there are people that are hearing what is going on in great detail. On television you see native languages being used. There is more written material in native languages than ever before. In fact, in our whole official life, if you like, we see native languages playing a major role in our society.

I would be very careful about insisting on enshrining eight official languages where they have the power of a statute in law to achieve purposes which may be more confusing than if you take the simpler route and say, "We have dealt with this as the language of law for a long period of time; let us continue to do that" but through tolerance and understanding, still work very, very hard to make sure that our aboriginal languages deserve the place of dignity in our everyday lives. I think we should all work towards that goal, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Zoe): Mahsi cho. The Chair would like to recognize Mr. Chris McCormick, acting president of the Native Council of Canada. Welcome to the House. The Chair would also like to recognize Mr. Gary Bohnet, president of the NWT Metis Association.

--Applause

Member for Sahtu.

HON. STEPHEN KAKFWI: (Translation) Thank you. I would like to also voice my opinions on this language issue. I am going to speak for a while in my native language. This land where we are from, we are the original people on this land. The non-native people, the English-speaking and the French-speaking people, are the ones that came amongst us after we had been here for a certain amount of time. It seems like the English-speaking people and the French-speaking people came into a native person's house and from the time they came amongst us they have been fighting amongst themselves. From the time they came among the people here, it seems like the French and the English have always been against one another, and still today they are not at peace with each other.

No Attention Paid To Feelings Of Aboriginal People

It seems that although this is our land, and it is foreigners that came amongst us it is like we are the ones that are not within our own home. We are the ones that were here first and we are the aboriginal people of this land, and these people that have come amongst us, they were the ones that were fighting amongst themselves and they paid no attention to what we thought as people. They paid no attention to us. The English and the French, depending on what they wanted to do, although they were the foreigners, they came here and did what they wanted. We, the aboriginal people, what we thought about it, how we felt they should live amongst us, they paid no attention to this.

Recently they have said this, "If we are going to live amongst each other in peace, we have to keep the French language, and create laws, so that the French will be recognized. We have to work with it." They have announced that to us. Because the French language is so important, we have to spend -- so the native people, although the foreigners are amongst us, it seems like we are in confusion in this area. We are not saying that their language is not important. The French say that their language is important. If they say this, we as native people have to support them as well. In order to preserve the various languages we have to support one another, the English and the French. We are the original people that have lived in this land, Inuit as well as the Dene people, the Cree. As of today we still have not heard the English or the French people come to us and say, "This language that you have is important, how can we help you to keep it?" It seems like there is no attention paid to us in this

area.

Aboriginal Languages Should Be Treated Same As French

It seems like there are people, visitors, that have come to your home and are telling you that this is what you will do. This is how I feel; this is what is happening here.

What is being said about the French, I do not feel it is important to be used in the workplace. But if it is to keep the relations good, it is said that the French is important. Perhaps the French or the federal government may think that to keep the relations good the French language should be a working language and that money should be spent in this area. If they feel this way, they should look at the aboriginal languages in the same way. They should tell us, "You native people who speak the Dene languages and the Cree language, the Inuit language, how can we preserve your languages so that languages would be known, recognized and become official?" If the Federal Government and the French people were to tell us this, it would be good but it does not seem to be happening.

It seems like since the English and the French who have come among us, right from the start since they came among us they said that they would look after us, right from the beginning. Recently, they are still saying this. They made this Meech Lake Accord, this paper that is called the Meech Lake Accord, and they asked us to support them in this paper and we, the aboriginal people, and the non-aboriginal people from the North have all stated that we do not support this paper. We would like to settle things for ourselves first, settle our languages and our rights, after we are done we will look for ways to support you. But it seems that right from the beginning since they came among us they have been saying this but it seems to be a little too late now. The reason for my saying this is that we are all sitting here; our people that we represent, they are the ones that elected us. There are a lot of people who will be speaking on this. There will be a lot of things said concerning this. But, for myself and the people that I represent, all the people who live up here in the North, and how I feel about this issue, that is the reason why I said that this matter should be spoken about.

Committee To Set Language Policy

The things that are happening in this area are quite good today but there still needs to be a lot more done. In the next two weeks, right from when we met in Norman Wells this fall, there were a certain number of people who were put on this committee. There are three people working on the language issue, the native languages, the Dene languages, the Inuit language. They will be recommending how we people who are in positions as lawmakers, how we can work with the native languages and settle this area, how we can make policy so that work can be done in these areas. Nick Sibbeston, Titus Allooloo and Mike Ballantyne are the ones that are on this special committee. They will be recommending a position quite soon on how the languages can be preserved and recognized and we, as lawmakers, will discuss the recommendations. They will be presenting this to us as legislators here in this House. The paper that is before us today, we have still not had time to read it. There are some people here who are saying how they do not like the material in the House written in French. They say that perhaps because the French language is being used the native languages would not be used. This is one of their concerns. For myself, I do not mind the French language. In the native languages, if it was written down, I would not mind this. Perhaps they made these laws so that things would be well in the future but for myself I do not mind. For this year and perhaps next year, we aboriginal people who are in positions as lawmakers should make policies. I would like to

know more on how we can do this.

We should make our position in this area clear to the federal government. They are the ones who come among us and they still manage a lot of things for us in the North. Whoever works for the federal government, perhaps the Inuit language, the Dene languages, maybe they can learn these languages so that they can carry out their work for the people up in the North. If this is how we feel, this is what we should say to them. We people from the North, we have our own aboriginal languages and we feel they are very important for us, too.

There are a lot of things that we are talking about that we should settle. I have been among you for the past two years and there are a lot of things yet to be worked on. But still you have to think things out and work slowly through things in order to get them right. If people are not really aware of something it seems that they do not really want to listen or hear more about it. We who are aboriginal people, the Inuit people, the Dene people, and non-native, sometimes we do not understand one another very well and there are some things that we would like to see passed soon, so we are able to work well with one another.

Budget Cuts Hamper Progress

There are a lot of things where a lot of money is needed, and although there are things that we say that we need to have done there is no money available to do these things. Right now, what we are saying is that our budget has been cut. There are a lot of things that we need to work on yet, but there is not enough money. In the future we will only have a certain amount of money to carry out our work. We are saying that if we run ourselves into debt, our children will be the ones that will be faced with that problem. Still, we who are the Dene and Inuit, we know that today, while we are in this House, we have to make a strong position for the aboriginal languages. We have to think about this so that the native languages can be preserved for the future, and we have to spend money in these areas. If we do not spend money in these areas, it will not be of any use in the next 10 years. We have to start now. Perhaps in the future our children will be saying, "Back then, when it was possible for you to do something, you did not do anything. You just said that there was no money and you did not do enough." Perhaps they will be saying this and that would not be right. Right now, while we are here, we have to do this work for our people. We cannot leave it for another 10 years. By that time there will be a lot of native languages that would have died out. Perhaps there may be money, but by that time it will be too late to preserve those languages, if we do not do the work right now.

While we are here, sitting together, discussing this issue, there are a lot of things that we can settle for ourselves. There are a lot of things that are very important, such as the native languages. We talk about making laws for these areas, but we always say that it is too expensive, we do not have enough money to do this work, and we are not quite ready to do this work. If we still feel this way, we may not get this issue settled, and not do the work that is required.

There are some of us here that know our native language and we know the English language as well. Whenever we speak in our native language we know that our native languages are important and we have to make laws so that they can be preserved. When we say that, it seems like there is always one person that says that there is not enough money to do this, and we say that we cannot carry this out; the law states that we cannot do this type of thing, so it seems that we waste a lot of time trying to carry out the work that needs to be done in this area. I am not sure how long this issue will be discussed, but for myself, for the area that I represent, the

people that I represent, I want them to know this is why I stated that this area should be discussed in the House. We, the elected people that are here, we will be done in our jobs in another year and a half. After that, whoever else wants to take our positions may be free to do so.

Acceptance Of Different Cultures Required

I feel that the French language is important as well. I felt that as a Dene person, because they do not pay attention to me I cannot say that I will not pay attention to them as well. I know that their language is important to them, so I have to support them in that area; but they are not the only ones who are living in this land. We, the Dene, this is our land. Ever since they came among us, it seems like they do not pay attention to us. They pay no heed to us. It is stated that if the French language is not taken as a working language they may be leaving us. It seems that since they came amongst us -- the way I feel about it is they have been here for a long time -- the English and the French it seems like they spent a lot of time fighting amongst themselves and it seems to be no different today. It does not look like they are thankful that they have just seen one another, shaking one another's hands; it seems like they are never happy and it still seems that way today, the way they talk. We, the Dene, it seems like within our own home there are foreigners that have come among us. We look at them as hostile toward one another. If we are going to live well amongst one another, the native people have to be taken into consideration as well. If the government would realize this, perhaps in the future this area would be a lot better, but they do not live well amongst themselves and for that reason they cannot live well amongst us too as Dene people or as aboriginal people.

I feel that it is important for myself to be using my aboriginal language as well, and for the future I feel there are a lot of areas where the native language can be used. Whoever we appoint, they have to make policies for this, and this is what we are discussing right now. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Zoe): I would like to recognize the board members from the Native Council of Canada who are also here in the gallery. Welcome to the House.

--Applause

The Member for Aivilik, Mr. Ernerk.

MR. ERNERK: (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My honourable friends, first of all I am happy that we can use the French and English languages and the aboriginal languages; we have the privilege to use different languages. I am very happy to see this. When I was growing up -- and there are two other Members that I know so well, John Ningark and the other person that is sitting behind me, the MP for Nunatsiak, Jack Anawak -- we grew up listening to three different languages. The first language we grew up with was Inuktitut in Repulse Bay. At that time we were still called Eskimos. The two other languages that I used to hear in Repulse Bay and Chesterfield Inlet were English and then French. Personally, Mr. Chairman, I am not against any languages. It does not matter whose language it is. I am always happy to learn to speak a different language. When I was growing up I had my language which is my parents' and my ancestors' language. It did not cost any money to learn my Inuktitut language. The second language that I am using, which is English, and which I adopted, was paid for by Canadians. To date I use both languages. I am proud to use them both. When we were kids we used to try to speak in French. We were learning a little bit of it when we were in school in Chesterfield Inlet. We had a school teacher, I think he is living in the Western Arctic now, George Dumeulle, he used to teach us. We tried to speak the language but we were not learning full-

time to speak the French language. So up to today I do not know how to speak French but I used to enjoy trying to learn the French language. The first time I heard the Dene language, I tried to learn their language as well. There are a lot of words I understand. I know how to say, "How are you? I am fine." But I did not learn that language. (Translation ends)

Preservation Of Aboriginal Languages

The ultimate objective of wanting to recognize aboriginal languages, for me and the people that I represent, is to preserve the Inuktitut language, preserve it forever. You ask me how to preserve the language. You preserve the language by using it. I have been using the Inuktitut language all my life. I use it at home. I use it in the work place. But that is me. I use it down the streets. I use the Inuktitut language wherever I can. I think, Mr. Chairperson, what we must do is to recognize the aboriginal languages in the NWT, equal to French as well as equal to English. Use aboriginal languages in the work place, in the government offices, in company offices. That way you preserve the language.

Let me quote a few items that were presented to the special committee on aboriginal languages by the Inuit Cultural Institute in Rankin Inlet when we met with them in January of 1990. With regard to the 1986 task force on aboriginal languages, this is a quotation coming from this presentation to us. They indicated this statement was given to us by Roy Goose: "I would like to quote a phrase from the report of the 1986 task force on aboriginal languages: 'Many people in the Western Arctic told the task force that they do not feel that the Government of the Northwest Territories is their government as long as it cannot communicate with them and serve them in their own aboriginal languages.'" That is very important. That is a very important statement. I will tell you why.

(Translation) In our land, in Nunavut, if I have to speak in Inuktitut, if I am unilingual, if I try to communicate with different government departments, my message will not get through and I will not be able to communicate with them because I do not speak their language. They do not understand me. If I do not speak English I cannot communicate with them. (Translation ends)

As a unilingual Inuk in the Keewatin Region, as a matter of fact in many places in Nunavut -- I cannot speak English if I am a unilingual person, I cannot speak to the regional director; I cannot speak to the superintendent who ultimately has the responsibility of serving me. So we have a big gap. That is the problem.

(Translation) The education system, I would like to talk about the correspondence that was read to us by Roy Goose. (Translation ends)

I would like to provide a quotation from Mark Kalluak, editor of the Isumasi magazine, Inuit Cultural Institute language coordinator. This was part of the presentation that was made to us in Rankin Inlet. I quote, "Traditionally the Inuit have always passed their knowledge of the environment, social structure, politics and language to the younger generations by word of mouth. Therefore the practice of all education makes us Inuit habitual listeners and speakers, as opposed to learning and teaching by utilizing documented vocabulary, geographic and environmental methods. The present education system must change. This change must utilize more Inuit in the schools and educational facilities throughout our homelands. Our language and culture must be taught as a first language beginning at the preschool level through senior high, college and other higher learning teaching institutions. It must be made compulsory in order to cultivate our greatest human resources, our descendants. They must be given an identity.

This identity is necessary to develop and practise in order to ensure our culture and language survives the overwhelming assimilation of the Euro-North American culture."

(Translation) I think those quotes have to be considered, if we are going to be using aboriginal languages in our land. At home my fellow Inuit are fully supporting the preservation of aboriginal languages and they wanted to be recognized. (Translation ends)

I continue to quote from Mark Kalluak's presentation, "Our identity and culture must be reflected and practised in the everyday working habits and environments of all aspects of government. Look at the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. A very large portion of the people's representatives are Inuit. That is a good example. Let us also put that into practise in the infrastructure and manpower of the Government of the NWT."

(Translation) If we are going to recognize the Inuktitut language, the committee is fully supporting that aboriginal languages be recognized by the government. The federal government is not assisting us in any way. In the House and in the NWT the aboriginal people try to co-operate by working with each other and try to communicate.

Meech Lake Accord Excludes Aboriginal People

This accord called the Meech Lake Accord is not a good agreement. As a matter of fact when I think about June 3, 1987 when the Meech Lake Accord was agreed on by the First Ministers of this country I thought, and I still think, what an historic shame it was for Canada. An historic shame because it did not include all Canadians as decision-makers for Canada. It left out aboriginal people as true participants in making decisions for Canada. It does not have the aboriginal clause within that so-called Meech Lake Accord. It was a terrible accord. I cannot live with it. It does not recognize me as a Canadian, as someone who can make decisions for Canada. If the Meech Lake Accord would have been a good accord and included all aboriginal Canadians as participants for making decisions for Canada, we would not have this argument with regard to the issue of languages in Canada.

The Legislative Assembly of the NWT is a representative of all people in the NWT. This Legislative Assembly is a compassionate Legislative Assembly. It is a caring Legislative Assembly, it represents people from all walks of life in the NWT. We can do better than the Government of Canada...

MR. LEWIS: Right.

MR. ERNERK: We have done better than the Government of Canada in representing our people who live in the NWT. We can again show the Government of Canada that we can and will recognize aboriginal languages in the NWT.

Mr. Chairman, I say the things that I said because I know the Government of Canada, this present government, refuses to recognize, refuses to negotiate aboriginal languages within the land claims of the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut and I think that is shameful. I was part of the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut when we were negotiating land claims with the Government of Canada and the Government of Canada refused to talk about aboriginal languages in Canada. I do not think that is a Canadian way. I am a Canadian, a very proud Canadian, and I think that is the real Canadian way. Mr. Chairperson, Members of the Legislative Assembly, I thank you for listening.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you, Mr. Ernerk. Mr. Gargan.

MR. GARGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to get some clarification, I would like to ask the Law Clerk, first of all, with regard to the official languages as defined under the federal law. It does come into force the first of this year. I would like to ask the Law Clerk whether or not under our present legislation, or under the federal legislation, this government can repeal the Official Languages Act so that the French language becomes an official language with the same status as aboriginal languages. Is it possible for us to do that under present legislation?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you, Mr. Gargan. Madam Law Clerk.

LAW CLERK (Ms MacPherson): Mr. Chairman, it would be our opinion that you could repeal the Official Languages Act. However, it would be of no force and effect until such time as the repeal was adopted by the Canadian Parliament. In other words, Mr. Chairman, we can repeal it; however it is of no legal force.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you. Mr. Gargan.

MR. GARGAN: I would like to ask again for a legal opinion of our Law Clerk, Mr. Chairman, if anywhere in Canada this kind of a situation is imposed on the other provinces; or are the other provinces not in the same situation as we are in? Are we in a situation where we cannot, at this point of time in history, change the languages for the North here?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you, Mr. Gargan. Madam Law Clerk.

LAW CLERK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I could take the honourable Member's question under advisement. I do note, however, and it is my understanding that similar amendments were made to the Yukon Act with regard to official languages as were made to the NWT Act. I am not sure, Mr. Chairman, what the situation is in other Canadian provinces.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you. Mr. Gargan.

MR. GARGAN: Mr. Chairman, I was under the impression that nowhere are the provinces put in a situation in which the section that you gave your opinion on with regard to -- even though we passed legislation to repeal the Official Languages Act at the federal level it will have no force, unless Parliament accepts it. Is this the same situation that the provinces are put in?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you, Mr. Gargan. Madam Law Clerk.

LAW CLERK: Mr. Chairman, to my understanding no other Canadian provinces are in this situation; just the two territories.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you. The next speaker is Mr. Pedersen.

MR. PEDERSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I may, I would like to comment a little along the same line as the comments Mr. Gargan made, which also was alluded to by Mr. Wray in the opening up of this debate. There is very much of a constitutional issue involved in this whole debate. Mr. Sibbeston stated in his eloquent debate that the federal government has given us democracy, it has given us a right to do certain things legislatively so that we can now pass legislation as we wish. This is true up to a point. The federal government can still override any legislation that we make, and that is why, of course, the application that Mr. Gargan just got clarification on refers only to the NWT and to the Yukon Territory. We are considered federal territories.

Official Languages Act Passed Under Pressure Of Imposition

Mr. Chairman, over the last day or so I have heard some comments which have been directed at myself and others in this House: Why are we bringing up this issue now at the eleventh hour? You were there, I was told, in 1984 when you passed this legislation. That is correct, of course. We were there when we passed the legislation, but I would like to say that that legislation was passed, and those of us who were there will remember, under considerable pressure. We were told then that the federal government would indeed like us to pass an official languages act of the NWT. But, we were also told that if we chose not to do so, it would be imposed upon us anyhow, regardless of what our choice was -- whether we passed it voluntarily or not -- an official languages act would be imposed upon us. However, if we were good boys, and if we did it voluntarily, they would give us some money to develop aboriginal languages with.

On the basis of that, which I think perhaps in principle was not the right thing, but for purposes of reality we did pass our own Official Languages Act. I want to emphasize though that when we passed that act we did so thinking that we passed legislation as any other piece of legislation that we passed, and that means that we have at any later stage the power not only to pass legislation but to amend the legislation at a later date, or to repeal the legislation.

Power To Amend Official Languages Act Removed By Federal Government

Mr. Chairman, on our orders of the day for this very day, there are seven acts, five of which are amendments. They are amendments to acts. We have that power. We have that power, except on one act. Of all the acts we have passed, there is only one where we do not have that power. We passed our Official Languages Act in 1984. In 1988 the federal government passed a unilateral amendment to the NWT Act stating that we cannot amend our Official Languages Act, except to enhance the French language rights within that act. We cannot do anything, we cannot repeal the act and we cannot do anything to detract from what the act contains already, unless the federal government passes legislation agreeing to our legislation. It is not even a matter of holding the power, as they do over all our other legislation, that they may disallow it. In this case they actually have to pass an amendment to the NWT Act.

Mr. Chairman, I find this to be repugnant. A number of us in this House, in fact, did not even find out about this amendment to the NWT Act until quite recently. It was not published; it was not announced; it was merely done very quietly and effectively.

Mr. Chairman, I feel that this is contrary to the parliamentary rights and the equal rights that are granted to all Canadians under the Canadian Constitution. The federal government should not have the right to arbitrarily and unilaterally pass a bill four years after we pass ours, effectively denying us the parliamentary privilege to do something with an act that we have democratically and legally passed. They should not have that right.

Mr. Chairman, I think there are others in this House who would be far better equipped to argue the aboriginal languages act. I do want to say on that issue, though, like Mr. Wray and Mr. Patterson, we may not be aboriginal people but we sit in this House as Members for constituencies, democratically elected Members for constituencies that are up to 85 per cent aboriginal people and as such we represent the views of our constituents and the view of my constituents are very much like that of Mr. Wray's constituents and, I am sure,

Mr. Patterson's aboriginal constituents, that we do not wish to see aboriginal languages reduced further from secondary to third level, imposed upon us by the federal government enhancement of second languages.

Act Passed Believing It Could Be Amended

Mr. Chairman, I am convinced, and I have always felt, that you cannot achieve democracy for the many if you do so by denying the democratic principles, the basic principles to even the few and in this case I think that the federal government is taking not only our parliamentary privileges away by making it impossible for us to amend an act which we have legally passed. It was done under what I consider fraudulent conditions because we were not told at the time we passed ours that that would be a locked-in act. We were not told then that the federal government, four years after the fact that we passed it, would slip an amendment in that prevented us from doing that.

So to keep my arguments to the narrow confines that my point of privilege yesterday was, I feel that the parliamentary privileges of this entire House have been offended by the federal government in removing our rights to pass legislation, to amend legislation and to repeal legislation if we so see fit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gargan): Thank you, Mr. Pedersen. Mr. Pudluk.

MR. PUDLUK: (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. After listening to the comments, I agree with them. This is a big concern when you are an aboriginal person from the North, not just from the North but also the aboriginal people in Canada, because their big concern is that their aboriginal language is in their blood; they cannot lose it. If we were to lose our language we cannot go any further, we would not be able to do anything. We do not want to lose our languages because we are part of Canada and that is why we have Canada today, because we were the aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Languages Should Be Recognized

When the federal government first came to the North it did not seem as important then that we had two gods. Most of the time we have to pray to both of them. Today I just want to pray to one god. It is as if the federal government is trying to act like God; they want to have the power to be able to control anything. It is as if we have to kneel down in front of them if the aboriginal people are asking something from the federal government. I think this should not be the case for the aboriginal people. I have no objection at all as to what kind of language anybody uses, whether it be French, Dene or Inuktitut, English, but for the aboriginal people the languages we have should be recognized. (Translation ends)

I was replying to the Commissioner's Opening Address and I said in the 1950s when the traders started coming to the North, to my area, every time I wanted gum I had to dance first. If I did not dance I would not get the gum. Today I can buy my own. I am not willing to kneel down before the federal government and request my language approval. I do not kneel down to ask for that permission. Today I will stand for my people and their aboriginal language.

(Translation) I do not want to wait for the federal government. One hundred and forty years ago when they were first exploring the North West Passage, Franklin was one of them. He did not have too many Inuit guides because he had the money to do it. Up until now nobody is sure as to how he died and where. The other time they went through the North West Passage they had native guides to assist them and that is why they were able to do it. For that reason the aboriginal

people of Canada have put Canada on the map, because the aboriginal people were there first and they know their own land.

It is clear that the federal government does not have too many concerns about what is in the North but they should be proud of us who are the aboriginal people of Canada, not just in the North but there are a lot of native people down south in different provinces. We all have different languages but they should pay more attention to the aboriginal languages. (Translation ends)

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, we are involved in that. We do not have to go overseas. We can do things here in Canada.

(Translation) I want to thank the Members who made comments on this issue. I would like to emphasize again that I am not against any particular language, they can use whatever language they wish in the North. But for the aboriginal people, we want our languages to be recognized. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gargan): Thank you, Mr. Pudluk. Mr. Patterson.

HON. DENNIS PATTERSON: (Translation) First I would like to make comments in Inuktitut. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me an opportunity to speak on a matter that touches the whole NWT and the people of Iqaluit. They use the Inuktitut language in Iqaluit and they also use English and French. Personally I would like to see that these aboriginal languages be used in the schools and officially recognized.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gargan): At this point in time the Chair would like to recognize Senator Joyce Fairbairn in the gallery.

---Applause

Would you proceed, Mr. Patterson?

HON. DENNIS PATTERSON: (Translation) Also, Mr. Chairman, I would like to speak a bit in French. In Iqaluit there are numerous Francophones and the majority are Inuit in Iqaluit. We have three languages in Iqaluit. An MLA such as myself must speak in English, French and Inuktitut. I believe that living in Iqaluit we live together in tolerance and fraternity. (Translation ends)

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the people of the NWT are very tolerant of differences. We are proud of the fact that we are a multilingual, multicultural society and my constituency of Iqaluit, perhaps more so than most, is a good case in point. Iqaluit has the highest proportion of Francophones of any constituency in the NWT and, Mr. Chairman, I spoke to the president of the Association Francophone d'Iqaluit today about events in our House and concerns in our House and he said that although the Francophones of Iqaluit know they have certain rights under the Bill of Rights and under our Official Languages Act, they are not going to pound on the table. They are not impatient. Mr. Chairman, I believe the Francophones in my constituency are as supportive as anyone else and as I am of the language and culture of the majority of people in Iqaluit and the majority of people in the Territories who are aboriginal peoples. I do believe that Francophones in the NWT are by and large very sensitive to the strong concerns of aboriginal people expressed so eloquently today in this House on these matters. Mr. Chairman, I do not want to, for a minute, sound defensive about our aboriginal language recognition in the Northwest Territories; however I think most people would acknowledge that we have made some great progress and that we are the envy of many native people in North America who,

unfortunately, have very little recognition of their languages at all.

Motion To Extend Sitting Hours, Carried

Mr. Chairman, I would at this time move to extend hours in order to conclude the debate on this issue.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you, Mr. Patterson. There is a motion on the floor. To the motion. All in favour? Opposed? The sitting hours are extended. Mr. Patterson, you still have the floor.

HON. DENNIS PATTERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I said, I think we are making some progress with respect to aboriginal languages. Much more needs to be done. I know that some of our aboriginal languages are not yet capable of being put into written form, although I do think in recent years progress has been made in developing a standard writing system. I would also note a fact that I do not believe has yet been mentioned in this debate, that although it is not official this Legislature has, in fact, been providing translation into Inuktitut of all our bills including financial bills for the last 10 years or so.

Tolerance For All Minorities Must Be Maintained

Mr. Chairman, whatever we do as a result of this debate -- and I think there are good suggestions coming forward which I support -- I think we must be ever vigilant, in keeping with the spirit of our constituents and people of the Territories to be tolerant of minorities. The rights of aboriginal people are very important. The enhancement of aboriginal languages is very important to us. However, let us not advance the rights of aboriginal people at the expense of another minority. Many people in Canada were concerned about recent actions of the Government of Quebec through Bill 178 in revoking the Charter of Rights to suppress the rights of Anglophones in Quebec by prohibiting English on exterior signs. I am sure we do not want to make the same mistake here. That is why I was a little bit concerned about Mr. Pedersen's point of privilege. Had the Speaker ruled in favour -- and I am glad he did not -- the precedent could have been used by a non-speaker against similar use of aboriginal languages in documents in our Legislature.

I am frankly a little bit worried when I hear Mr. Sibbeston say French is insignificant because the numbers of people who speak it are too few. Maybe I am a little sensitive because it certainly is not true in my constituency, but I think we must be careful of that argument lest it be used against the Chipewyan people, lest it be used against the Loucheux.

Having made these points, Mr. Chairman, I want to say very clearly that I do believe there is a great deal to be done. Unfortunately, a few years ago when the First Ministers' Conference on Aboriginal Rights began and we had the task of defining aboriginal rights, it was decided that language and cultural rights should not be discussed as a first priority, that the first priority was aboriginal self-government, and I respect the strong views of the national native associations that that was the priority. Mr. Chairman, it is unfortunate that those talks failed and that we did not get around to national recognition of language and cultural rights because I think that if anything is an aboriginal right, if aboriginal rights are to have any meaning in this country, then surely fundamental are, rights in language which is the carrier of a culture and the expression of the voice of a people.

Provision Of Government Services In Aboriginal Languages

Mr. Chairman, I believe that we must address in this debate

the question of services of our government and services of the federal government in aboriginal languages, income tax forms, signs on public buildings. These are the important things, and, Mr. Chairman, much has been made of what is written in a bill and on a statute, but quite frankly I can think of more exciting reading than statutes and bills. I do not know how many people read statutes, maybe lawyers do -- I know lawyers do. I am a lawyer and I must say that I still find statutes very dull uninteresting reading -- so when we talk about expanded services in aboriginal languages I would, quite frankly, much rather have 10,000 good quality children's books printed in the aboriginal languages of the NWT than have all our statutes translated into all aboriginal languages. I think that would have much more meaning to our people.

Mr. Chairman, I think specifically that the federal government, which has required that we become officially bilingual, must make significant progress in recognizing aboriginal languages in its services in the NWT. I was delighted this week to have heard that, for the first time ever, Inuit have been hired by the Iqaluit post office. That is a small but significant step, but it is an example of where we need to go with federal public services.

I would also like to see attention paid to the critical issue of the renewal of the aboriginal languages funding agreement. I think the problem, Mr. Chairman, is that money has been available rather more readily to get services in the French language in the NWT -- and I am happy that children in our schools can take immersion programs in French and I think most people feel that that is an asset -- but we need to pay attention to providing services, and funds to provide services similarly in the aboriginal languages. Mr. Chairman, I think one of the things this committee should discuss is providing support to the renewal of the aboriginal languages funding agreement. I think that good progress was made with the moneys we obtained some four or five years ago, as well as with what our government was able to add to those moneys. Now much more must be done. The agreement must be renewed and this House should endorse that priority and support those negotiations.

I would like to just give a small example of how I think things can ideally work, Mr. Chairman. A few years ago in my community something happened which may be instructive. There are a number of people in Iqaluit whose first language is French. Children come up from Quebec with their parents, not being able to speak a word of English, and those parents asked for a French first-language program in Nakasuk School. The Secretary of State for Canada offered some funds to do that and the Francophone Association came to the Iqaluit Education Council and asked for support. The majority of that council were Inuit. The members of that council did not say to the Francophones, "You cannot have this program", even though there were comments about how unfortunate it was that more money was not available for first language programs in Inuktitut. But what they did say was, "We should do something to enhance Inuktitut as well." And they chose to approach our government to receive support to publish Inuktitut curriculum in Nakasuk School. They got support from our government. The Inuit Literature Society published a number of readers and good quality Inuktitut material which is now used in that school and schools in Baffin.

That is the way I think we should go with this issue, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the report of the special committee on aboriginal languages. I am confident they will make good recommendations and that we can take actions based on their recommendations, and the sooner the better.

Mutual Respect For All Languages Is The Goal

Mr. Chairman, there is a climate of tension and in some cases

intolerance in this country. I think we should be careful, as most speakers have been, to make sure we are not associated with some of those ugly situations. We are quite different here. The aboriginal languages are the first languages of our people and of this part of Canada. They were used and present before English and French. That gives them a very special status and that gives the NWT a special status.

In my community, as I have said, Mr. Chairman, I believe that people of all races, from all parts of the Baffin and the Territories live in relative harmony and mutual respect. I think we are privileged that the children in our schools can learn French, Inuktitut and English. The more languages the better, I believe. And I believe our children are fortunate in our community that they have that opportunity. I think the goal of our Legislature and our government should be to aim for the day when all our languages and all of our peoples are treated with equal respect. We do not have that feeling of equality and mutual respect now. But I think we must do something about it and I think we can do something about it. Let us try to do as we have in some small ways done in my community and provide that respect and equality. Let us celebrate our multicultural, multilingual richness and our diversity.

I believe that most Members are open to conditions by which we can give further recognition to French. But let us do it hand in hand with continuing progress on enhancement to the aboriginal languages. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gargan): Thank you, Mr. Patterson. Mr. Whitford.

MR. WHITFORD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to address this special committee. My comments will be brief. I think we have heard a lot said today on the issue of French language, aboriginal languages, and their entrenchment in the NWT. I believe that I represent perhaps the largest concentration of French-speaking people in the NWT, with possibly the exception of Iqaluit, by percentage. However, the point is that French-speaking people are in the NWT in some numbers, percentage wise, and probably not as great as the aboriginal peoples and non-native peoples of other languages. Here in Yellowknife we have French language classes, we have French immersion classes. My son went for four years into French immersion. We did this because we recognize the value of a second language.

I am a Metis person; I was born and raised in the Northwest Territories but I consider myself to be unilingual, bilingual English. For a short period of my life, however, I did speak French. I was raised in a boarding school, Fort Resolution, which was run by the church at the time and we were compelled to speak French, regardless of our mother tongue. In this case it was English. Perhaps you have heard over the years the horror stories of how the native languages were beaten out of children. You were denied the very basic necessities of life if you did not comply with the prescribed language at the time. This never happened to me in all the time I was there, but I have heard these stories. I know for a fact, though, that there was a phrase that we had, "Se tu ne parle pas, tu ne mange pas -- if you don't speak, you don't eat." The language at the time was French. It was a tragedy at the time, but when I look back at it and at how, now after all the years that have gone by, I have let French go, I wish that I had kept it up. It was not the best system of introducing a language, but I look now and I see a much more humane way of doing it and I pass this on to my kids by having them in French immersion.

That is only a little bit of where I am coming from, Mr. Chairman, when I am speaking on this issue. Yesterday I attempted and, as the House recognized, my attempt at French was very poor; but I am personally working on that

particular problem.

Value In Speaking Other Languages

But I guess what saddens me more than my ability not to be able to speak French is also my ability not to speak other languages. My grandfather was not bilingual, he was quadrilingual. He could speak Chipewyan, French, Cree and English, from one to the other just as the interpreters switch from one to the other. He was very fluent. He was learning to speak Inuktitut before he passed on, but he never lived long enough to accomplish that. He saw the value in a number of different languages, although even at the time that the native languages were not encouraged in the school, they did not die out; they were there; people practised them and, thank heavens, they continue today. And I guess I, too, recognize the fears that my colleagues in this House have for the lack of official recognition of their languages while we are now going to uphold the official use of French in this House, in these Territories.

French, by my colleagues' interpretation, is an important language. It is something that came here at the turn of the century, maybe a few years before, along with the fur traders of old, and was used extensively throughout. The native peoples adopted parts of it. I know that I have a heck of time conversing with a person who speaks what I would consider the real French, as opposed to mine. But nonetheless it is here and I appreciate their concerns and I want to say that the people that I represent are not demanding that French be used on every traffic sign and every piece of paper and stuff, but that it is an official part of Canada now.

Way back in 1984 -- maybe not that far back but it is a long time in the life of a politician -- this House accepted an agreement with the federal government to implement French language as one of the NWT official languages. This was done to the chagrin of the Members, I am sure, because they wanted, and still want, to have their native languages officially recognized. They are, as I said yesterday and as I will state again today, recognized by this House and by the Territories, and by the people of the Territories to a large extent -- far greater than is legally allowed by the rest of Canada and the provinces. And for good reasons too, as was well said by previous speakers, Mr. Chairman -- that aboriginal languages, whichever dialect is spoken, have been here since time immemorial. They should not be placed secondary to other languages in areas where they are predominant.

Aboriginal Languages Accommodated But Not Recognized

We go to great lengths to accommodate the unofficial official languages in the Territories, Inuktitut and the various Dene languages. Everything is interpreted, certainly into Inuktitut. Our letterhead has syllabics on it. I think it is a step short of official recognition by Canada that in the NWT at least, and perhaps the Yukon -- I will speak only for the NWT -- there is a certain difference that should be taken into consideration. This is where, I think, we have to start.

Canada, of course, as we are all aware, is a very tolerant country when it comes to immigrants. We recognize cultures, customs, and we go to no end of trouble to accommodate them within our society -- somewhat controversial at times of course -- but we learn to be tolerant, we learn to recognize the individualities of various groups; and yet the aboriginal people in the NWT are waiting patiently for that same recognition by that same country, by that same government, that bends over backwards in some cases for immigrant cultures from wherever they are. I think this is probably where a travesty of justice is taking place. I think we are short steps away from making that correction, and I think what we have to do, and what this House has to do, is to work very closely with the

committee that is looking at that.

In the meantime, the issue that is before us, of course, is the official recognition of the French language in this Assembly. We cannot carry on another day unless we come to some agreement on these documents here. Personally speaking, and speaking for my constituents, I see no problem in working with these documents, whether they are written in French or English, because I have all kinds of good translation; but I want to work with them, I want to get on with the other business of the House.

I also want to make sure that the aboriginal languages committee gets all the physical help and financial support that it can possibly get in order to get official recognition on a par, if we have to, with English, with French, with Inuktitut, with Dogrib, so long as we can come up, in this House, with some agreement as to how this is going to be done.

We have to work, we have to labour long and hard, to come up with some kind of compromise even between the native language people. Where will Dogrib, for example, be spoken and written? It will serve no purpose to the people of the NWT if we had it on every document. It would serve no purpose if we had North Slavey or South Slavey printed on every document across the North. It has to be done in areas where that language is represented and given official recognition in that area. I do not know how we are going to do it yet, but I do not think we can afford to let it go because of that problem. We have to labour mightily to achieve that, and that is what we are going to do, but in the meantime we are still confronted with this issue of official recognition.

Agreement Made To Accept French

Mr. Chairman, that die was cast in 1984 when the government of the time accepted French language, they accepted the moneys to implement French language into the Government of the NWT and we have to live by that agreement.

I do not feel as a law-abiding citizen and as a person that is elected to represent people that I have any choice in supporting the agreement entered upon in 1984 to provide French language to residents of the NWT who are French speaking, just as we would in any province. I do not think we have much choice. We are not a province yet. We are still a child of the federal government -- and I do not use that word in any derogatory way -- I think that we are going to enter into provincehood at some point in the future if the government continues to pursue this and the people of the NWT want it, and we continue to fight for that. We will reach provincehood, and then, after that time, when we have come of age, Mr. Chairman, we will make our own laws without having to go through the Commissioner to Ottawa for approval of everything that we do here. When we come of age, then we can take -- and maybe we can set aside -- if French language is taking a higher priority than aboriginal languages -- move it to equality with aboriginal languages and put aboriginal languages in their proper place in the statutes and the laws of the NWT, wherever that is applicable.

House Must Not Self-Destruct Over Language Issue

I think I would advise the House to be tolerant so that we can get on without too much turmoil so that this House does not self-destruct over this issue, because if we do, what have we gained? I do not think we have gained anything, and I think the people of the NWT are going to be short-changed if we spend all of our time and energy working on an issue which already the committee, as Mr. Sibbeston said this morning, is working towards and has already arrived at a certain satisfactory level of progress towards an aboriginal languages act. We are making that progress now, but if we continue to

fight over this issue we are going to waste an awful lot of our valuable time; and the people are going to be the ones that are going to be short-changed. I think we can do both. I believe we can do both, and that is what I want to do.

I sometimes feel I am riding on two horses at the same time with one foot on one and one foot on the other because I do represent French-speaking people and yet my heart tells me that I have to represent native people across the NWT as well. It is not an easy job, and I do not think it is an easy job for any Member of this House, Mr. Chairman, to make these decisions; but here we are at the 11th hour. I think the people that were speaking against any kind of official recognition should have spoken up a long time ago. They knew this was coming...

MR. LEWIS: Right.

MR. WHITFORD: ...a long time ago, Mr. Chairman. I have said that to them too -- why now? Why not before the last election, for heaven's sake? We had a lot of time then. And why not, every time we presented a budget, bring this home, bring it home to the people that we are not happy with that and we want to change it? Maybe we would have made more headway with the federal government than we will now. When we take a look at the newspapers now and there is all this backlash against French language in this country, I think the federal government is going to dig in their heels a bit more. The timing is bad. But the timing, if we are patient, and native people are patient -- they have waited an awful long time in the wings of this Legislative Assembly before they became officially recognized for their customs. We now have a fairly generous amount of tradition in this House. They are patient. Be patient a few more years and when bilingualism, if it ever happens as it was quoted in the newspaper this morning, starts to unravel -- we can help it unravel if that is the case. Maybe then when we become a province we can tell Ottawa from our provincial self, that we do not really want total bilingualism in the Territories because it does not apply across the Territories, it does not apply in Jean Marie River or Grise Fiord or in Igloodik or other little communities where it is not really needed. But it applies in certain large communities in proportion to the demand. The same as would native languages in proportion to the demand in these centres.

I do not think it would serve the public well if we had the City of Yellowknife having to work in native languages because the proportion of native peoples in this city is not that great to warrant that. Where it is demonstrated, yes we will do it and we will set up the provisions for it. I think we can accommodate the French language quite well in the Territories at very minimal cost, if we have a staff of people available to interpret French statutes to those who require it, as we do right now with the native languages as they are.

Native Languages Translation Available

Any person who speaks a particular native language can have it through this Legislative Assembly, I am sure, and through this territorial government's language bureau, translated into any "unofficial, official" language in the NWT. We can do that. It is a phone call away and there is no reason why we cannot do the same thing with the French language. But the fact remains at the moment that we have to implement it because we are compelled to do it and I think it would be disastrous if we did not do it. I am certainly trying to encourage this committee to give its recommendations to the aboriginal languages committee to promote that.

Mr. Chairman, I probably have spoken longer than I intended, but other Members of this House have spoken eloquently on that. From the constituency that I represent I want to make sure that we do not ignore French because it is law across the

country. We have to comply with that. We, as law-abiding elected people must abide by the Canadian law first of all and I think if we do not do that we are going to be in trouble and I do not think we need that kind of thing at the moment. I will work toward the entrenchment of official aboriginal languages in the NWT as will be recommended by that committee. I am in full support of it and I am sure that people that I represent will be in full support of that and they will let me know that so I can convey that to this House at the appropriate time.

But in the meantime we are confronted with a particular hurdle and I think that hurdle must be set aside. We have certain requirements we have to meet so that we can get on with the business of the House, otherwise we are going to be in a lot of trouble. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): I would like to recognize Senator Willie Adams in the gallery.

--Applause

Thank you. Mr. Ningark.

MR. NINGARK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am a Canadian. I have one vote. I am able to run for government nationally or territorially. I expect no more or no less recognition than the next Canadian. I am proud to be a Canadian.

(Translation) I learned to speak Inuktitut when I was growing up. My mother taught me how to speak Inuktitut and my sister taught me how to write in Inuktitut. When we went to school I learned English but at the time the Inuktitut language was respected in the classroom. We could use it outside of the school. I use Inuktitut at home all the time. My family, my wife, my children all use Inuktitut. I want my children to learn in Inuktitut. The problem is that Inuktitut is not recognized by the Canadian government. The people who voted for me speak Inuktitut.

Personally I recognize English, French and aboriginal languages in the NWT. We have to preserve those languages. I will support the French language as long as we are going to support Inuktitut as well. Today the Inuit want their children to have a good education. Children are forgetting Inuktitut. I think all of us, Inuit, Dene, French, English, should support all the languages in the Territories. I want Ottawa to recognize our aboriginal languages because I know how many Inuit are in Canada but what they are forgetting is that Inuktitut is still not recognized by the government.

Everything in this House, the flags and the sealskins -- all Canadians should be treated equal. In the NWT the English and French should be all treated equally. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Mr. Alloodoo.

HON. TITUS ALLOODOO: (Translation) Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We use Inuktitut and Dene, as well as French and English in the NWT. When the European first came to Canada we had to learn their ways and languages. When I was going to school I was not allowed to use my own language. If I happened to use it, I would be punished by the teachers. But today in 1990 I feel that we want to preserve our language and culture. Government in the NWT should recognize our language and preserve it, Mr. Chairman. I fully support enhancement of different aboriginal languages in the Territories. We should be using them more and they should be recognized by government.

I would like to say that any Inuktitut language should be used in the workplace and in the school. That is what I want to see in the future in the NWT. (Translation ends)

I, too, believe that our goal should be that the aboriginal languages should be recognized and be official in the NWT. The fact is that before Europeans came into our country we spoke it and we were here before them. When they came they imposed their languages on us. Our languages were not as important as theirs. I am proud to be a Canadian and a native person who was originally a Canadian, before the Europeans came. It is my vision that my language be taught in the schools, that my kids will be able to take my language in the schools and the school system will be geared toward improving aboriginal languages in the NWT.

Imposition Of Language Legislation By Federal Government

I am proud to be part of the government that has done so much, compared to other jurisdictions, in terms of services provided to aboriginal peoples. That very fact is demonstrated in our Legislature today. We have interpreters interpreting into aboriginal languages. But I am somewhat concerned that in today's society in 1990 that a government, not the GNWT but the Government of Canada, could impose legislation that tells us to use a certain language. But that is the way today. I do not like it. I do not think it is fair, but that is the way it is. I would like to see in our future a government that has the same power as that of the provinces. I would like to see our jurisdiction respected by the federal government. Until then we will see the events that are happening today. I hope that we will get the mandate that is given to other provinces.

Mr. Chairman, the committee that was established has done quite a bit of work toward enhancement and also drafting legislation that will recognize aboriginal languages in our government. I think as native people we will be satisfied by the committee's work in terms of making our languages official in the NWT. I would recommend to the Legislature that we wait to see the report of the aboriginal languages committee tabled in the Assembly.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, I am looking forward to the day that my language is used in the work force and taught in the schools so my kids will be able to use it no matter where they are in the NWT, but it takes time.

(Translation) Mr. Chairman, everything that has been said today was good to hear. We have a better view now on where to go from here today. The committee that was established last November will take your thoughts into account. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you. Mr. Ballantyne.

HON. MICHAEL BALLANTYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The debate today about aboriginal languages and the French language goes to the very heart of what we are as a country and what we are as Canadians. At one period in my life I travelled fairly extensively around the world. At that time, this country, and Canadians, were held in very high regard by people in other countries around the world. We were known at that time as a country and as a people who were compassionate, who were understanding, who were sympathetic to each other. I wonder if people around the world would say the same thing today. The debate on languages which is taking place in southern Canada troubles me and troubles many Canadians very much. It is characterized by bigotry; it is characterized by a lack of sensitivity, even in its worst form, overt racism. When I think, what does that mean to me as a Canadian, to me as a Northerner, I worry very much as to what sort of a country we will be handing over to our children.

I listened to the debate here today. I think the debate had a

very very different tone. What I heard today as an Anglo-Canadian who has lived in the North for 20 years, from the aboriginal people of this Assembly representing the majority of the population of the NWT, was a very clear, very eloquent plea. They are only asking for what is right. As the founding people of Canada, they are asking that their languages be accorded the respect and the status that their languages deserve. They are asking that their languages be preserved and protected for all time. I think that no Canadian can argue with those sentiments.

Opportunity To Set An Example

Unfortunately, we in the NWT cannot influence directly decisions of the federal government or of the provinces. We do have a magnificent opportunity here to set an example for the rest of the country. We have an opportunity, and I think an obligation to the aboriginal people of the NWT and the aboriginal people across the country, to show that it can be done; that aboriginal languages can be enhanced, aboriginal languages can be given the respect that they deserve. I hope that our committee in the next week or two will at least present to this Assembly the beginning of that realization. What I heard today from the many eloquent speeches made here in the House is that there is not a fear or hatred of the French language. What I heard here is that if aboriginal languages were given their proper status, that the aboriginal people of the NWT -- unlike many people who live in this country -- would be willing to accommodate French.

In fact, I think that if we carry out our deliberations during the rest of this session in the spirit that was demonstrated during this debate, I think we could do something very very unique. I think we can demonstrate to Canada -- in fact to the world -- that we can do something that no other jurisdiction, probably, in the world can do. We can treat, with respect and dignity, nine languages. That would be an amazing feat and a model for Canada and for the world.

I look at language in a special way. I think of French as a language which enriches the culture and fabric of our country. I think French and Francophones bring to this country a spirit and a unique sense that helps to make this country unique in the world. I am deeply troubled when I hear some of the comments coming from such places as Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury. I think we should emphasize, and emphasize very strongly, that the NWT is not Sault Ste Marie, and the NWT is not Sudbury.

When I look at what I can do most for my children, I think to instil in them the desire to learn languages is the greatest gift that one can give. My oldest daughter is learning Dogrib, next year she will be studying French, and I would hope that before she is finished learning languages she can learn an oriental language. I think that we have to recognize that the world is getting smaller, the world is getting more competitive, and one of the greatest tools we can give our children is the ability to learn and respect languages. I think that if you respect other people's language, you respect other people. I think that is very, very important.

I hope that we leave here today with a renewed sense of what we want to accomplish, and I think that if we carry on in the spirit of this debate we will, in fact, be a model for our country. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you, Mr. Ballantyne. Mr. Zoe.

Promotion Of Aboriginal Languages Must Be Equal

MR. ZOE: Mahsi cho, Mr. Chairman. (Translation) Mr. Chairman, I agree with the prior statements, and I agree with

what Mr. Sibbeston had to say. When you talk of aboriginal languages, and you speak about the French and English languages, they have to proceed together, they have to be enhanced together. That is not what is happening today. That is why we are talking about this issue. The government wants to proceed with the English and French languages only. In 1984 there was an agreement made and an Official Languages Act made. We talked about how the government was going to proceed, although it was written down in a major document then. After that we had some funding from Ottawa and with that money we were to enhance aboriginal languages, but even today aboriginal languages have not been dealt with as expected. That is why we are talking about this issue today.

Today here, the way the government is proceeding with this issue, this is not the way we should proceed. In the past, 1988, the federal government changed the NWT Act and added to it and we could not change the Official Languages Act. We told them we wanted to be consulted, but they proceeded without us. We want to change that act but it is going to be difficult to change that act.

The government that is in power now, we sent them a message that we in the NWT want aboriginal languages to be comparable to French and English. We want changes to the act. Mr. Sibbeston was the Government Leader at the time. At that time we wanted to change the act. I think that will be the best way to go. We do not want our languages to fall back. The federal and territorial governments make decisions based on documents and we disagree with the process the government is taking now. Language is very important and Members here have talked before me and we the Dogrib people will support the Members who have spoken. I do not want to talk for a long time. We have a special committee on aboriginal languages and we will have that study tabled and we will be talking about this issue then. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Mr. Ernerk.

Motion To Refer Debate To Special Committee On Aboriginal Languages, Carried

MR. ERNERK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the debate on the use of French and aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories be referred to the special committee on aboriginal languages for consideration in their deliberations.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Thank you. Your motion is in order. To the motion.

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed, if any? The motion is carried.

---Carried

The debate on French and aboriginal languages is concluded.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Pudluk): I wish to report progress.

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Gargan): At this time the Chair would like to recognize in the gallery, Mr. Serge Pinot, the French Consul General from Edmonton and Mr. Norbert Carrasco-Saulnier, the First Secretary from the French Embassy in Ottawa. Welcome to the House.

--Applause

Item 18, report of committee of the whole. Mr. Pudluk.

ITEM 18: REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. PUDLUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been debating the use of French and aboriginal languages in the Northwest Territories and wishes to report this matter concluded.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The House has heard the report of the chairman of the committee of the whole. Are you agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

--Agreed

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item 19, third reading of bills. Mr. Ballantyne.

HON. MICHAEL BALLANTYNE: Mr. Speaker, could I seek unanimous consent to return to Item 13, notices of motion for first reading of bills, to deal with the appropriation act?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Unanimous consent is being sought to return to Item 13. Are there any nays? Proceed, Mr. Ballantyne.

ITEM 13: NOTICES OF MOTION FOR FIRST READING OF BILLS

Notice Of Motion For First Reading Of Bill 9-90(1): Appropriation Act, 1990-91

HON. MICHAEL BALLANTYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the House for their consideration. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, February 12, 1990, I shall move that Bill 9-90(1), Appropriation Act, 1990-91, be read for the first time.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Item 13, notices of motion for first reading of bills.

We will go back to Item 19, third reading of bills. Item 20, Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Hamilton): Announcements, Mr. Speaker. There will be a meeting of ajuqtit on Monday, February 12 at 9:00 a.m. and at 10:00 a.m. a meeting of the standing committee on finance.

ITEM 20: ORDERS OF THE DAY

Orders of the day for Monday, February 12th.

1. Prayer
2. Budget Address
3. Ministers' Statements
4. Members' Statements
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Oral Questions
7. Written Questions
8. Returns to Written Questions
9. Replies to Opening Address

10. Replies to Budget Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Tabling of Documents
14. Notices of Motion
15. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
16. Motions
17. First Reading of Bills: Bills 2-90(1), 3-90(1), 4-90(1), 5-90(1), 6-90(1), 7-90(1) and 9-90(1)
18. Second Reading of Bills: Bill 1-90(1)
19. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
20. Report of Committee of the Whole
21. Third Reading of Bills
22. Orders of the Day

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Monday, February 12, 1990, at 1:00 p.m.

--ADJOURNMENT

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