

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

Before this time there had been no satisfactory means of providing essential welfare and educational help to these women and their children. This government therefore decided on humanitarian grounds that educational and welfare assistance should be granted to these people on reserves in the same manner and to the same extent as if they had retained Indian status. We hope this will solve particularly vexatious problems of which my hon. friend is well aware.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Chairman, I have been sitting here in comfort waiting for the estimates of the national gallery and hoping to cause the minister to be uncomfortable later. However, I want to take this opportunity to make a few remarks that are related to remarks made by the hon. member for Vancouver East and the hon. member for Skeena with respect to that order in council which made it necessary to return land in Indian reserves in British Columbia and any cash that was left in the band or tribe funds. I have suggested on a number of occasions before that this cash should be used to erect a memorial to the Arrow lake band which has now become extinct, the last member dying in 1955. I rose to ask the minister this question. Has the department returned the cash balance in the Arrow lake Indian band fund to the province of British Columbia?

Mrs. Fairclough: The answer to that is yes.

Mr. Martel: Mr. Chairman, I should like to make a few remarks before the first item of these estimates is approved. This question is of great interest to me because there are a number of Indian bands scattered around in the riding of Chapleau which I have the honour to represent in the house. First, I should like to join with other members in thanking the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for the very kind co-operation I have always had from her department and I should also like to thank the officials of the department.

(Translation):

I should like to go on in French because in my area young Indians who have been attending school for a few years receive their education in French.

In fact, even though those young Indians did not have the opportunity of learning French before entering school, they are nevertheless able to follow the curriculum of the province of Quebec. Most of them spoke only English before coming to school, but they learn French very fast and they get along very well.

[Mrs. Fairclough.]

I should like now to deal with the young Indians attending the St. Marc de Figuerly school located about ten miles south of Amos. These young pupils come from all parts of the area, since it is a boarding school. The Oblate Fathers who operate the school are doing excellent work, not only in this particular place but wherever there are Indians in my riding.

There is also a special problem concerning the Indian families living in Abitibi, as most of them, during the last few years, have chosen to settle in or in the immediate vicinity of the towns of Amos, La Sarre and Senneterre; others intend to do likewise in the future. Already some have moved into Chapais and Chibougamau, near Waswanipi lake, Mistassini lake, and even Mattagami lake, site of the proposed railway line provided by the bill discussed a few days ago.

The migration of Indians toward organized areas is explained by the fact that the trapper and his family can no longer make a decent living out of trapping.

They also know that closer to towns they have a better chance of getting proper hospital and medical attention and that their children are closer to schools.

As for the town of Amos particularly, the 40 families who settled there live in overcrowded and often unsanitary dwellings.

That is why last year, the delegates of the Abitibi Indian band, better known as the Dominion Abitibi band, appeared before the Indian affairs committee and asked the Indian affairs branch to build as an original project at least 30 houses to permanently accommodate an equivalent number of families; the project was to be carried out on the Leclerc farm, bought for that purpose a few years ago and surveyed and subdivided in 1959.

I even believe that in 1960 some preparatory work was carried out by the Indian affairs branch, with regard to the building of those houses.

In my humble opinion, those houses should be supplied with modern sanitary equipment and the cost of sewer and plumbing could be paid from the available funds of the Abitibi reservation.

I hope the minister will be able to tell us, when she takes the floor, how soon this program involving the Abitibi Indian band may be carried out.

(Text):

I was just mentioning in my remarks that there is a project near Amos for the Abitibi Dominion band on a piece of property that