

Indian Act

5. That all Indian reserve boundary lines be placed back in their original position in so far as they have been removed and some reserve land taken by whites without the knowledge or consent of the owners.

The minister has said that he has asked certain Indians to come here to consider the matter, and I sincerely hope that they will be given ample time to consider the bill before it is proceeded with further after its introduction in the house. While it is not always profitable to refer to what has happened in the past, it is fair to say that the Indians were not given a proper opportunity to consider the legislation in detail after Bill 267 was first introduced and before it was proceeded with on second reading at the 1950 session. I need only remind the minister that he appeared at first to be insistent on putting the bill through in spite of the objections that were made that the Indians had not had a fair opportunity to consider it.

For one reason or another—I think probably because of his sense of fairness which eventually came to the fore—when it was demonstrated to him that was the fact he changed his mind. You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that on June 21 when the matter came up for second reading the minister took the position that second reading must be proceeded with, although we asked repeatedly that the bill be withdrawn to give an opportunity for further study. On that day at about ten minutes to eleven at night, as I recall, I moved an amendment to second reading, namely, that the bill be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence. My amendment was not designed to object specifically to any portion of the bill but merely to give some opportunity for expression of opinion that the bill should not be proceeded with simply on the ground that sufficient time had not been given for its consideration. *Hansard* reports that the house divided on the amendment which was negatived on division, 39 to 90. On that occasion only two members on the government side voted in support of the amendment. That night the minister indicated his intention to proceed with the bill as the first order of business the next day. Some time between eleven o'clock that night and the opening of the session the next day, however, that decision was reversed; the bill was not proceeded with, and was dropped at the end of the session of 1950.

I mention this instance, Mr. Speaker, because it shows there is a right way and a wrong way of doing things. As the hon. member for Lethbridge (Mr. Blackmore) has

[Mr. Fulton.]

said, the Indian Act is not amended so frequently that we can afford to take this amending bill lightly. The minister himself has told us that the Indian Act has been amended only some fourteen times in over fifty years, not a history of very rapid progress. Now this parliament has the opportunity to enact a real charter of rights for the Indians of this country. Parliament would not be fulfilling its responsibility either to the white people or to the Indians if it enacted a measure which did not do justice to the merits and needs of the Indians. We cannot do that justice unless we know the views of the Indians themselves. If we are sincere in our desire that they shall now embark upon a course which will qualify them for full citizenship, as I believe we are, surely one of the first steps is to ask them what they want and what they think would be the proper course to bring about that result. After all, they know themselves better than we know them. Therefore we cannot proceed with any haste between the introduction and first reading of this bill and the time it comes up for second reading.

So I ask the minister if he will give us the assurance during this debate at the resolution stage that this bill will be allowed to remain on the order paper for an adequate time before he proceeds with second reading—and I hope he will mention a minimum time—so that not only the Indians who are here may consider it, but so that hon. members may obtain the opinions and advice of the Indians in their own districts.

Mr. R. R. Knight (Saskatoon): Mr. Speaker, as yet we do not know anything about the terms of the new legislation, but we do know something about the bill which was withdrawn last year. It had plenty of room, I think, for a good many changes and improvements. Summing up the whole question of what was the matter with it, I believe the trouble is that the government treats the Indian like a child but expects him to act like an adult. In some cases, certainly along the Mackenzie, when these people were given the right to vote a couple of years ago, they had no preliminary training as far as I know in citizenship itself, only half were able to speak the English language, and only a very small fraction could write in any language.

My main purpose in rising today is to express certain ideas I have in regard to the education of Indian children. There is no difference between educating an Indian child and educating what we call a white child, except that their circumstances and environment are different and they are brought up