

*The Address—Mr. Reid*

affairs should develop into a much more vital department than it is at present.

I was very pleasantly surprised, when I began to deal with Indian affairs, that this matter came up.

• (8:20 p.m.)

I found that the Indian affairs branch was on many occasions far in advance of the thinking of both the Indians and of the whites in Kenora and a number of other places. In many cases the branch was further ahead in its thinking than were the provinces. I am basically in favour of these agreements. However, I recognize that though parliament may legislate, others have to implement. The way things have been going it may be that the intentions of the government will be frustrated by personality conflicts and by people out in the field.

The approach to Indian affairs in the past has been paternalistic; its effect has been to create a paternal relationship between the Indian affairs branch and the Indian. This has lessened the Indians' sense of initiative, their independence, the spark that makes people do things. It might not be a bad idea if we were completely to take away everybody concerned with Indian affairs at the present time and transfer them to other departments of government, and then go out and recruit a whole new department which would have a different approach.

I am aware that a body of people who have been carrying out a program under one philosophy find it very difficult indeed to change that philosophy. I think this is a matter which the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Laing) might look into. I know my proposal is a drastic one; but the situation is drastic and my concern in this case arises because I feel we must break the bond which now exists between the Indians and the department. We must eliminate this paternalistic attitude and we must do it soon.

I think it is important, too, that we should adopt a new approach to Indian affairs. Indians do not necessarily want to be integrated into our society; they do not necessarily want to be assimilated. As a matter of fact I have found a great deal of opposition among the Indians to assimilation. What they do want today is participation. They want to be able to make their contribution, to do their share. And they recognize that they need help.

I think we have to listen to the Indians, now. They are beginning to think; they are beginning to discuss many things and arrive at solutions. All too often our people who go

out into the field listen to the words of the Indians but they do not listen to the sense. As a result, the Indians have become terribly frustrated, because what they are saying does not get home. All too often we do what appears to be good for the Indian affairs branch, or what is good for the government of Canada instead of what is good for the Indians. A new approach has to be accepted and I hope we shall be able to take such an approach when the white paper on Indian affairs comes down. I understand there is to be a report called the Hawthorne report made from the University of British Columbia. It may be delivered to the government in April of this year. From discussions I have had it seems it may herald a new approach in our dealings with Indians. I trust the government will look carefully at this report and consider it very seriously.

There is much more I can say about the situation. Before concluding, however, there is one point I must make. It concerns a group of people who are lost, who are cut off and who have nowhere to go. These are the people who are non-treaty Indians; they are not included under the terms of the Indian Act and they are ignored by the provincial officials, possibly because they do not know how they are affected and what their problems are. I would suggest that when the Act is revised the non-treaty Indians should be brought under the Indian affairs branch and under the Indian Act. If this were to be done I think we would be making provision for a great many people who are presently being ignored and whose living conditions are almost unbelievable, so great is their poverty.

There is another group to which special attention should be paid. I refer to those Indians who reside so far from the main centres of population as to be virtually beyond travelling distance. These are the Indians who live in the northern reserves and whose only contact with the outside world is through the occasional aircraft that flies in. The Indians on some of these reserves have kept up the old native skills; they are hunters, fishermen, trappers. In such reserves as these there is still dignity to be seen. There is solidarity. There is even contentment and happiness. But there is another class of reserve up there in the north which does not possess these resources. Those who live in such places are completely dependant on welfare payments from the government. For them, life is just one welfare cheque after another; they have no hope, no prospects.