

Q. You were re-elected three years ago?—A. Yes.

Q. How old are you?—A. I will be 50 next month.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any other preliminary questions that the members of the committee would like to put to this witness? Will you proceed, chief.

The WITNESS: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen: First of all I wish to thank the committee in the name of all the Indians of the northern territories whom I am here to represent. I feel that it is an honour to appear before you on their behalf and sincerely hope I may be of some assistance to the committee in the difficult task of considering what are the best changes that may be made in the Indian Act.

To the parliamentary committee for the examination of the Indian Act,

HONORABLE GENTLEMEN,—In response to an invitation extended to us to send a delegate to Ottawa to speak before your committee on our behalf, we, some thirty-two chiefs and delegates from ten bands of the Manitoulin Island and North Shore District, held a meeting in Little Current, Ontario on May 19.

As ours is a very large territory and the problems to be discussed are many and intricate, it is well-nigh impossible for one man alone to do justice to our cause, wherefore we have duly elected two delegates to go to Ottawa for us—Chief William Meawasige of the Serpent River Band on the North Shore and Lawrence Peltier of the big Wikwemikong band on the Manitoulin Island. The expenses of the latter are being defrayed by ourselves.

These men carry with them a general brief which we have all drawn up together in assembly, and which we hope they will read and discuss with you. They will also take to you various briefs from individual bands and associations, namely: Mississauga, Serpent River, Sheshegwaning, Sucker Creek, Spanish River, West Bay, Whitefish River, Wahnapiatae Bands, and Wikwemikong War Veterans' Association. Sheguiandah reserve although represented at the meeting had no individual brief. These briefs we would like to see printed as appendices to your minutes of proceedings and evidence.

In regard to the procedure at our meeting, we read through all the briefs a section at a time, commented on them sometimes in Indian, sometimes in English, and then had motions regularly moved and seconded and voted upon as to what we thought should be put in the general brief. Much of the matter of the individual briefs will, therefore, be found in this general brief, but there were other ideas, too, which were brought in by the different speakers and they will be recorded here. As our time was limited, we didn't dwell long upon some problems which concerned, perhaps, one band alone; that's one reason why we want all the briefs published so that you could read them afterward and take suitable action.

1. *Treaty Rights and Obligations*

It was the opinion of all that there had been far too many failures on the part of the Indian department to abide by the treaties solemnly entered into with the Indians, and the Indian department is notoriously lax in protecting the Indians' rights guaranteed by solemn treaty. If they are short of money, they seek ways to escape the annual payment of the Robinson Treaty money by striking off the list all classes of people, e.g., women who had received it all their lives until they married an Indian who didn't receive it. The mere fact of their marriage could never alter this fact, namely, that they still were descendants of the original signers of the Robinson Treaty, to which signers and to their *descendants* the annual payments were promised.

Whether it was well organized tourist organizations that wanted to deprive the Indians of their treaty-guaranteed hunting and fishing rights, whether it was game-wardens and small-town magistrates that wanted to browbeat the Indians; whether it was provincial governments that desired to wrest from the Indians rights set up by treaties made before the provinces themselves came into exist-