

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

have one of the finest Indian schools in Canada, which is run by one of the churches; but I think this matter of further training, and particularly trades training, is important, because our Indians are getting closer and closer to assuming equal status with the non-Indians, and I think they must be in a position to stand on their own feet when they do eventually assume this status.

I must compliment the minister and the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, the duty of whose department it is to maintain the Indian health services. I think this is one of the finest improvements that has taken place in Canada over the years. The health of our Indian population has improved and continues to improve because of the increasingly better medical and hospital facilities provided. I should like to suggest that the Indian reserves should be provided with welfare people distinctly for themselves and not those who are dealing with the whole population. I am quite sure that within a very short time such workers may be found amongst the Indians themselves. I think our Indians are entitled to all federal welfare services comparable with those enjoyed by the non-Indians. I feel there are some deficiencies in this regard.

As I said before, the Indians in my district are prosperous. They have very rich producing oil wells on their reserve which are bringing them in a major income. They are ambitious; they are good farmers and they want to expand their farming operations. I suggest to the government that credit facilities, outside of band funds, which are available to non-Indians be made available to Indians. I am thinking of such facilities as the Farm Credit Corporation, the industrial credit corporation, the National Housing Act and so forth. Housing is being provided now by the government and from band funds.

The housing for Indians is excellent in my constituency. They are almost completely housed in new dwellings. They are getting electric power. With the expansion of credit facilities they would be able to put in water and plumbing, modernize their homes and get telephone service, things which we non-Indians take for granted, things which they have been very slow to acquire. With additional credit facilities they would very quickly instal these services and move one step closer to complete equality with their white Canadian brothers.

I should like to bring one other matter to the attention of the minister and ask her officials to take it into consideration. I refer to the matter of traffic speed in the village of Hobbema. Up until a few years ago the provincial department of highways provided restricted speed signs on the two approaches

to the village on No. 2 Alberta highway. However, they removed those signs and made the statement that the responsibility belonged to the federal authority. I ask the minister and her officials to consider the installation of traffic lights at the two approaches through this hamlet because over the past several years we have had several very tragic highway deaths there.

Mr. McFarlane: Mr. Chairman, first I should like to express my appreciation to the minister and also to the officials of her department of the assistance which they have given me at all times in my own area, especially during many trying times.

At this time I should like to bring to the attention of the department a matter which I believe is of importance. About a year ago through a resolution a contract was made with the Emerald Christmas Tree Company Limited in my area, and the Columbia lake Indian reserve No. 3.

This contract was made for a 30-year period. I just cannot quite visualize, Mr. Chairman, a contract being made for that length of time. I believe some advice as to the contract should have been given to the band concerned before it was signed. I believe it is part of the functions of the department to advise bands as to which way they are going and particularly with respect to a long term contract. I also believe that any business would hesitate before entering into a 30-year contract, particularly a new contract being made for the first time. This was the first time that this had occurred in my area, and in my opinion we should take some action in this matter.

Shortly after the contract was signed I was advised that the contract itself did not come before the council. It was signed by the chief of the band, something which I have confirmed with the department. I have a copy of the resolution here and also a copy of the contract. It was very unfortunate that the resolution was presented to the chief of the band at a time when he had just returned home from hospital and was recovering from a serious stroke. I do not believe it should have been presented to him at that time without witnesses being there representing the department or representing a group in the area interested in the affairs of the band.

The Christmas tree business is a highly competitive one. It is not a business that can be picked up on the spur of the moment by anyone and I believe that the opportunity should have been advertised so that all Christmas tree companies in the area would have had a chance to bid before a contract was signed with any individual company.