

*Indian Affairs*

The Indians may want a house made of canvas. They may prefer a good house made of canvas to an evil house made of bad sticks and bad stones. If they want to live like nomadic people, they have a right to do so, the same as we have. When we are tired of living in our highrise apartments, tired of the rat race in our great cities where most of us work 11 months of the year or more, we want to escape and go back to some form of nomadic existence for at least two weeks. We want to live in a canvas house, or one made of aluminum, on wheels. The Indians know that outdoor living is good for the soul and the body. Why should we, in our city-raised splendor, tell them how to live?

If we are going to spend large sums of the taxpayers' money building homes for Indians, for goodness sake let us consult them before we start. We should ask them what they think could be done with X dollars to provide the type of accommodation they want for themselves and their children, the type which fits into their lives, which fits into the kind of cooking arrangements they need. If we do that they will know we love them and they will be ready to take the next step, if they want to, towards our enlightened, civilized way of life.

Religion is a subject too hot to handle for most people, but not for Buffalo Two Horns, which is what the Indians call me. I have two horns and I am going to use them. I speak for the Indians I know on the western plains. They had a wonderful religion. They believed in the Great Manitou, the Great White Spirit. Today we almost have to apologize when we use that name—the Great White Spirit indeed, the Father of Mankind, the Creator of the Universe. They did not think he was dead; they had not buried him. Why should we go about trying to sell them our half-dead God when, left to their own devices, they still believe in the Great White Spirit who made them, who loved them, who made the whole human race, and who still watches over them? If we cannot give them a better God than the one we are peddling in our institutions, we should leave them with the one they have. But I am not one who thinks that God is dead, and I say let the churches join with us in parliament in giving the Indians a live religion in which they can believe, a religion which will help us to love them and make them love us in the way that we want to be loved by them.

In our civilized way of life we have tried to find an answer through labour unions. These have their place. Some people think labour unions have ennobled labour almost to the

point of worship. As I say, I think labour unions have their place, but they have not given man fulfilment. They do not give men fulfilment if they contribute to unemployment, if they call strikes the men do not want. Why should we go to the Indians and ask them to accept our standards of labour, or even our standards of wages, if we do not give them the dignity and the type of fulfilment that we ourselves would like to have?

I think it goes without saying that if we ask an Indian to work he certainly has a right to equality of wages with the white man, equality of working conditions, equality of advancement and opportunity. I have worked with these people in the ditches, over the pack trail, paddling canoes, and I have fought with them in the army. In every respect and in every endeavour in which they have competed with me I have found them my equal, and in a great many cases out in a natural environment have found them vastly my superior.

Some people would interpret the health provision clauses of the Indian treaties as meaning that we offered the Indians only the Hudson Bay Company's medicine box. But I think we must agree that we offered them whatever small advances we have made and will make in medicine. If the white doctor at Fort Garry was able to help them get through the fever, or could mend the bones of their children we were glad that they got that service. We were glad because we claimed we loved them, because we claimed we wanted to live in peace and harmony with them.

When the Indians signed treaties with us they did not later attack us and burn our wagon trains, as is usually depicted in Hollywood movies. In fact at the very time we most needed peace and quiet throughout the western plains, they remained peaceful and stayed on the side of law and order. In fact some of them were accused of being white-man lovers when they folded their arms and said, "There is nothing good for black, red or white in murdering each other." When we offered them health I believe we offered them both mental health and physical health. Here I mean equality of health services, the same as equality of work and equality of religion. If we are to put first things first then mental health starts with spiritual health. You cannot have a happy mind unless you have a happy spirit.

● (4:10 p.m.)

So we must proceed with this religion of love and faith. We must give them that. We must give them mental health, self respect,

[Mr. Bigg.]