

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

merely because he happens to think it is the wise and smart thing to do.

There are many other things I mentioned earlier, about which I should like to talk, which involve details of the activities of the Indian affairs branch in my own riding of Skeena. However, we have agreed to confine consideration of the remaining estimates so that they will be completed by next Friday and I do not want to transgress the opportunity and right of other members to comment on some of these matters. But because the minister has not had the opportunity so far I would urge him to take all the time he requires to reply, not only to my proposals but to those that other members have made on the various occasions that the estimates have been before the committee, in order that we will have a full explanation of the attitude of the department and the minister, and so that the Indians will not be left in the dark and will have as complete and understanding as is possible of the manner in which the government intends to deal with their rights. After all, as I said earlier, they are human beings and deserve perhaps a far greater degree of consideration in this parliament than any other group of human beings in Canada. I am including the Eskimo people in this reference. We should be prepared to give them this consideration.

Mr. Baldwin: I have a few comments to make on this item, some of which I have delayed for some time. I did not speak on the first item of the minister's estimates because I thought it might be wise to wait until now so that my comments could be concentrated. First of all, I should like to take this opportunity of congratulating the newly appointed assistant deputy minister. I know of his work in Alberta and I am sure he will bring a great measure of satisfaction, experience and knowledge to this department. As a matter of fact, this appointment did not go as far as had been originally suggested in the joint committee report on Indian affairs. At that time I believe we considered the establishment of a separate department. However, this move goes a long way and it is long overdue. I am happy to see that the move has been made and the position is occupied as it is.

It is quite obvious, as the hon. member for Skeena has said, that the government is now giving serious consideration to what are, in effect, very drastic, very sweeping changes in the administration of Indian affairs. In doing so they will tend to shift jurisdic-

tion, responsibility or administration or possibly a combination of all three. This, of course, is indicated in the press communiqué released following the conference the hon. member for Skeena mentioned. Let me make it quite plain that this was also a matter to which we referred in the joint committee. Personally, I believe this is a move in the right direction. There were a number of briefs presented by Indian bands indicating concern about the possibility, which was posed to them during a meeting of the committee, of a change of jurisdiction from the federal to the provincial government. My own view is that it is not right that we should have two sets of laws pertaining to groups of people in this country and that the ultimate, most desirable result, will be to have, as circumstances permit and people themselves require, jurisdiction put into the hands of provincial governments so that there will be an integration of the rights and responsibilities of the people of Canada.

Having said that, I must say that we must move with the utmost care, the utmost caution, not only to see that equity is done but to give the appearance of doing equity. In our dealings with the Indian people in the past, this has not been the case. The suspicions which they have indicated they possess are suspicions which they are certainly entitled to harbour because of what has happened in previous years. There must be the most careful, sympathetic consideration given in each instance to each band, each group, each section, each district and each area. It must not be done by wholesale regulations issued from Ottawa and bearing on all parts of the country.

We have to make it crystal clear that there will be no compulsion, no force of any kind. Any changes which will be made will only be made after the fullest consultation, discussion and advice. In the final analysis, the choice will be the choice of the Indian people themselves. I have had some experience with the Indian people in my area, and there are many thousands of them there. I can think of a number of cases in which departmental officials have attempted to compel these people to have closer contact with the white people with a view to fitting them into the white man's world. These conditions were not acceptable to the Indians within the area, as was proven by the results. I am not going to go into the details, but there is not the slightest doubt but that there are as many problems as there are Indians. Perhaps there is not an Indian problem so much as there are many Indians who have problems.