

Indian Affairs

function basis rather than granting complete jurisdiction to the provinces. This should be done in consultation with the Indian people and with the provinces.

Another program the Indian people have been requesting for a long time is a program of economic development. I hope the minister will clarify some of the present programs for economic developments. I understand that \$6 million has already been provided for this economic development program. I hope the minister will spell this out. One of the big difficulties connected with the development of Indian people has been the lack of adequate funds. One of the hang-ups has been the peculiar mortgage position of our land. We have not been able to mortgage our land in the same way as other people. There is an historical aspect to this. As one Indian chief pointed out, the Indian people are afraid that if they have this responsibility, some people will sell their land for a bottle of wine. I do not know whether this will happen, but the Indian people are afraid something like this might happen.

I hope as a result of the announcement of the provision of this \$50 million we will see a greater development of Indian reserves across the country. There are some very valuable Indian reserves in this country. Caughnawaga is one of these, as the hon. member who represents that area will tell you. I have heard various estimates of the value of that reserve ranging from \$400 million to \$800 million. This \$50 million program over the next few years will be very, very meaningful to those people. Time is running short. I would like to make more comments but if I do I will miss my flight.

Mr. F. J. Bigg (Pembina): The last time I spoke in this house, Mr. Speaker, it was with regard to the official languages bill. I said that was one of the most important pieces of legislation which had come before this house. I think I took a positive approach to that bill and I will attempt to take a positive approach to this debate.

The Indian people were the first citizens of Canada. In all their dealings with the white man, both in peace and in war, they have treated us with honour. This is the point at which we should pick up the threads, because I must admit on behalf of the white race that we have let them down in this regard. When you let people down on points of honour, you lose all the way down the line.

I think I speak with some knowledge of the Indian people. My ancestors pioneered the

west. My grandfather ran a Hudson Bay Fort. My mother was raised with Indian children because there were no white children in the area. She was the eldest in the family of nine. Both my grandfather and grandmother loved these people. I think that if we, the white people of Canada, can only get that one point across, that we love them the way my grandfather did, the way my mother did and the way I claim I do, then 99.9 per cent of the battle will be won. That is all they really want to know. When I say love them, I mean love on the highest plane. I mean that we have their best interests at heart. And if we have their best interests at heart we will treat them with honour. If we can convince the Indian people that we intend to treat them with honour we have won that battle.

● (4:00 p.m.)

They have always treated us with honour. If we can get them to sit around the council table now, roughly 100 years after most of the treaties were signed, the Indian people will meet us in exactly the same spirit. There have been threats of violence. I will not add anything except to say I would not blame them if they thought that during the next hundred years we were not going to treat them any better than we did in the last 100 years. But I do not think that is the case.

I want to compliment our young minister—after all, there is nothing wrong in being young—on the fact that he has taken the treaties out of the mothballs. Whether he intends to discard them or not I do not know, but I do not think so. I don't think he wants to, and I don't think he will. I agree with the hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour (Mr. Perrault) that he can expect the fullest co-operation from all sides of the house in arriving at a reasonable agreement on what we can do for these, our people.

I have some personal views on the matter, Mr. Speaker, and if you will rule that I am not veering too far from the narrow confines of the white paper I wish to outline a few of them. First of all, you cannot love people unless you understand them. It is very dangerous to go about such basic things as telling Indians the kind of house they should live in unless you understand the kind of house, in which they want to live. Assuming that we want a house made of sticks and stones, like one of the three little pigs, this does not necessarily mean that Indian people want the same kind of house.