

Indian Act

boosting him up and my hon. friend should be glad of that. He puts himself up as a great defender of Indians and an advocate of their welfare, but I want this to be understood. As far as I can see, if you trained the average Indian to the very highest degree he would still be under a serious disadvantage in open competition with white people among whom he hoped to dwell. In an age when unemployment is so common and jobs are so hard to get we must not imagine that just because we train these Indian boys and girls they are going to be successful. Many an Indian who had fine personal qualifications himself might have a child who would not have those qualifications. This happens among white people with great frequency. If the father of that child should have left the reserve and established himself independently, his children who did not inherit the qualifications they would need in order to live off a reserve would have to be able to go back in time of need. I think this is a matter that must not be disregarded.

For the reason I have just given I think we have to safeguard the band membership of Indians. I do not think we can afford to leave it entirely to the bands of Indians to determine whether Indians are going to be on reserves. If people have Indian blood in their veins, even if it is only one-twelfth or one-sixteenth, they may be parents of children who will have all the characteristics of full-blooded Indians. These children will likely have to go back to a reservation and claim the right of the reservation to which they should belong. I think provision must be made for this sort of case looking to the future, if we are to approach this problem in a realistic way with a long range view.

Certain things have been said by various men and certain things have been said by the minister which have caused the Indians much concern. The Indians fear he wants to get them off the reservations. For instance, the minister has used the expression "integrating the Indian with the white population". Throughout his life the Indian has been taught to suspect everything the double-tongued white man said; therefore when the double-tongued white man says "integrate the Indian with the white population" the Indian concludes that means taking him off the reserve, putting him in open competition with the white man and taking away the treaty privileges his forefathers were promised.

As far as integration is concerned I think it must be as a result of self motivation on the part of the Indians; it must be by teaching the boys and girls that they can succeed very well off the reserves.

Mr. Pickersgill: Oh, quite.

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Mr. Blackmore: No pressure must be put on them in any way, shape or form. When they integrate a good many of them will intermarry. I know of a good many combinations which are apparently quite successful, where Indians and white people have married. If they do that of their own free will and choice it is fine, and I believe they will eventually become white people; but let us have the instigation and pressure come from them and not from us.

There is another matter to which I wish to devote some attention and that is the preservation of the native religion, history and culture. The Indians have a great culture, a great history and a great religion. The ancestors of our Indians created those magnificent pieces of architecture we find down in Central America. It was not second rate citizens who produced those great works, and no doubt they were created by people of the same blood and with the same ability as our Indians. The Indians have a great history and they should know about it, because it will inspire them. They had a great religion, or they would not have produced those great works; and they should know about it. Whether or not they choose to follow their native religion ought to be a matter of their personal choice, but I believe they should know about all these things.

There is another matter which I think deserves some attention, and that is the matter of choosing the band council. Formerly in all the reservations and among all the bands the Indians who led the bands were people who had a hereditary right to do so, and the Indians were led by those who came from great families. We are now trying to introduce on many of the reservations the idea that the Indians should elect their representatives rather than select those whose heredity would qualify them for the position.

That poses a difficult problem, as the minister knows only too well, but my judgment is that the Indians themselves should be the judges as to whether they will choose as their band council those hereditary leaders or whether they will choose others whom they may consider better fitted for the task. Great care ought to be exercised in this matter.

Having visited the Indian reserve in my own constituency the minister will remember how far it is from one end of that reserve to the other. Just imagine—the minister will get the picture immediately—a meeting called just north of Cardston at which the Indians are going to elect a band council. How many of the Indians who dwell down