

into diplomatic relations. Because of these treaties the Indians therefore have never been regarded as British subjects nor can they ever be regarded as Canadian citizens under existing legislation. Thus, it follows that regulations pertaining to conscription for military service should not be applied to Indians.

It should be pointed out that the loyalty of the Indian people cannot be questioned. More than 2,500 young men and women from the reserves have served with efficiency and distinction in the war just completed. Most of these served voluntarily and the Indians do not object to this since it is in accordance with their age-old traditions which have always stood for the freedom of the individual and of the group.

The Indians do object to conscription. They believe that once they laid down their arms in peace with the British Crown and signed treaties with the Crown, they should never again be asked to take up arms in behalf of the Crown. Preferential treatment has been afforded to Mennonites, Hutterites, Doukhobors, and other groups of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe; there exists no reasons why the same exemption from military service should not be accorded by law to the Indians. Furthermore, it is submitted that the case of the Indians is a far stronger one than that of any other group, and that it deserves immediate consideration.

It should also be noted that in 1917, under the Act applicable during World War I, Indians were specifically exempted from compulsory military service. This practice should be continued and the principle reinstated in appropriate legislation for the Indians of to-day.

72. *Franchise is meaningless without education and economic liberty.*

This Organization does not favour the enfranchisement of Indians in Canada, but does recognize the necessity of eventually assuming the responsibilities and duties of citizenship, as well as the rights thereof, but the franchise itself is a thing of which the Organization cannot approve as such. It is regarded, not as a desirable end in itself, but rather as only one of the indicia of full-fledged citizenship. The franchise, without the education and knowledge necessary to exercise it intelligently, and in the interest of the country, is an asset neither to the Indians who possess it nor to the nation of which such element is a part. Similarly, the franchise, without equality of economic opportunity simply disguises a system which perpetuates classes of freedom and bondsmen, and does not pretend to attack the inherent evils of such an order.

It is the opinion of this Organization that the rights granted to Indians by their Treaties with the Crown are adequate to raise the standards of Indian life, provided that the Treaties are sympathetically interpreted and administered by men of good will, with cognizance of Indian problems, and the *bona fides* to assist in solving them. When that has been done and the matter of citizenship placed in its proper perspective as a choice to be made individually by every Indian for himself, the franchise will become meaningful to Canada's oldest people—and her newest citizens. The franchise, therefore, is regarded by this Organization as the final affirmation of racial, religious, educational and economic liberty and equality, and it is only upon this basis that the franchise is desired. At present, it is not desired, in future, it may be regarded as valuable.

73. *Enfranchisement must be on a voluntary and individual basis.*

Therefore, this Organization does not favour an indiscriminate or general enfranchisement of Indians, either in bands or in other groups. It is of the opinion that since the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are primarily individual in nature, so enfranchisement must be upon an individual and specific basis. Laws which enfranchise an entire band upon the vote of a majority thereof, violate the treaty rights of all Indians who are members of the minority group, and who have voted against enfranchisement. More important even,