

*Indian Act*

the same standards of education as Anglo-Saxon children acquire. They have not had that opportunity. I have visited reserves at various times, and engaged as I was in education some years ago I visited some of the schools on the reservations. When I looked over the work of the children from six to ten years of age I found that it compared quite favourably with that of children of the same age and in the same grades in the ordinary rural schools of Canada. Beyond that age, no attempt was made to get the children to remain continuously in school when the berry picking season was on, or the fishing season on the Pacific coast, and bit by bit they seemed to slip behind and later returned to a primitive mode of life.

I am of the opinion that when the new act is introduced it should be carefully scrutinized by the house from the point of view of the means we are going to provide for the better education of the Indian. I think that is the fundamental consideration we should have in mind. I do not believe that the educational system or systems that have been in effect on Indian reserves have been either suitable to modern needs or efficient. I should like to see Indian schools placed on the same level of educational requirement as the ordinary common schools in the provinces where Indian reserves exist. They should be placed under the same system of inspection with the same high qualifications for teachers engaged in educational work. I think that is fundamental. I know that there are those who emphasize the sectarian or non-sectarian aspect of the problem, but I do not wish to do that. I think a plan can be worked out which will be satisfactory to those who have been and are truly interested in the welfare and education of the Indian population, and who desire to see some better form of educational facilities provided than has been the case in the past. I say that a fundamental requirement is the reorganization and improvement of educational facilities for Indian children.

Given opportunities comparable to those provided for Anglo-Saxon or white citizens, whichever term you care to use, you will find that Indian youth will acquire just as good an educational standing as their white brethren. I am most anxious that this aspect of the proposals to be introduced by the minister shall receive the most careful and sympathetic consideration of the house.

I want to compliment the Minister of National Health and Welfare upon the fact that much has been done in the last few years to improve the health facilities on the Indian reserves and among the Indian population in our Northwest Territories and

other places. But a great deal remains to be done. Living on the outskirts of civilization as they do, with uncertain means of life at their disposal, makes it necessary that we take steps to improve their economic condition and to see that adequate supplies are available. After all, the basis of good health and good physical condition is an adequate and proper food supply.

Hospitals are being provided and examinations for tuberculosis have been undertaken. I hope that the scourge of tuberculosis among Indian tribes will soon be stamped out. I have not seen the more recent statistics, but I was shocked at the statistics published a few years ago with regard to tuberculosis among the Indians and the northern residents of Canada. I welcome this particular piece of legislation and I hope that when the bill is before us we shall find in it all that we hope for.

I want to say something that I might not be able to say on the estimates because with so many committees sitting one cannot always be here when the proper item comes up. In my own province of Saskatchewan, and I imagine this is true of other provinces, considerable difficulty is encountered in connection with roads through the Indian reserves. I know that the government of Saskatchewan does not expect the federal authorities to do anything about provincial highways that happen to pass through Indian reserves, but we must remember that many cross-country roads are municipal roads. While it is true to say that the road allowance is part of the Indian property and has been turned over to the municipality or the province for the purposes of communication, it is equally true to say that the maintenance of these roads constitutes a considerable drain on some of the municipalities.

When the minister is considering his estimates—that is when this matter should really be considered—I ask him to consider the payment to the municipalities of something toward at least the maintenance of these roads. In some parts of Saskatchewan the Indian population use the roads for marketing purposes and I am glad to say that some of them have automobiles. Consequently communication across the reserve is as vital to the Indians as it is to the municipalities and the people of the province who live off the reserve.

I do not want to delay the passage of this resolution but I did want to let the minister know that anything he can do to improve the condition of the Indian population, to improve educational facilities, on the reserves particularly, to assist also their economic circumstances and, in co-operation with the