

Indian Affairs

ing that state of equality. Equality for the Indian people of Canada requires far more than a transfer of jurisdiction to the provinces. We must face the fact that a transfer of jurisdiction by itself could make economic equality for some Indian people, and especially for those who live in the less wealthy provinces, a much more distant goal. We must recognize the fact that some provinces are in a better position to help the Indian people in terms of encouraging economic self determination, jobs, and the like. There are other provinces which are in a less fortunate economic situation and it would be simply unrealistic to expect them to carry the added burden of services to the Indian people. If there is to be a genuine concern for equality, and I am not prepared to question the minister's motives, it is imperative that the government now move ahead with full consultations with the Indian peoples and the provinces. The government must recognize that progress will be made much more difficult if the consultations are carried out in an atmosphere of distrust on the part of the Indian people and representatives of the provinces.

There have been enough unilateral announcements by the government. We all accept the goals of equity laid down by the minister and I accept his sincerity of purpose. I am disappointed this new effort has been launched in an atmosphere which indicates a failure to consult. I am pleased to learn the minister is now visiting the provinces. I hope he will not try to proceed with a program that simply involves a declaration of intention on the part of the government of Canada to transfer the rights of the Indians to the Provinces.

● (3:50 p.m.)

I hope the minister will settle down to the very serious and prolonged problem of developing a program that will be satisfactory to the Indian people, a program which the provinces would be willing to undertake and for which they will be given the financial resources to enable them to carry out this responsibility.

Mr. Len Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to take part in this debate at this time because I have to leave for Vancouver. Perhaps I can make a few remarks, however. This is a very important matter. There are approximately ten reservations in my riding. The reason I am going to Vancouver and the interior of British Columbia is to meet many of these people. I

[Mr. Stanfield.]

want to know their opinions. I want to know what they think of this particular policy before I make a lot of statements on their behalf.

There have been a lot of misrepresentations and misunderstandings as a result of some of the statements which have been made. A lot of these things that are embraced in the policy are things for which the Indian people have been asking. We have been asking ourselves, are we going to be treated as children for the rest of our lives or are we going to take on the responsibilities of adults? We must accept these responsibilities in the same way that other people do. We want to do these things. We want to take on the responsibilities which other people have. We cannot be treated like children forever. We cannot look upon ourselves as children. We have to participate in all aspects of Canadian life as human beings. I think this particular policy is paying off. It sets out some of the goals to which the Indian people have been aspiring. We have the same aspirations as other people.

Reference has been made to some of the things which are unacceptable. One of the major fears of the Indian people is that there will be a constitutional change which will turn over the responsibility for Indians to the provinces. This is something which the Indian people have feared for a long time. I plead with the minister to look at this matter very carefully, and clarify it so that it will be clearly understood.

Even though there is some fear on the part of the Indian people with respect to turning over the constitutional responsibility with regard to Indians, this does not mean that they do not want provincial services. We want provincial services, but there is another way of doing it. Many people have asked for this, including the North American Brotherhood, of which I have been a member for a very long time, as well as the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia.

The provincial governments are in the best position to provide many services, such as social welfare and education. They are in the best position to provide education because that is their responsibility. It is only right that we obtain our education from the same source as other people. It is not a matter of the federal government abdicating a responsibility. The government is trying to provide the best services possible for the Indian people. On many occasions I have asked the minister to give consideration to giving jurisdiction to the provinces on a function by