

Anything further?

Mr. FULTON: Now, resuming the question, Mr. Chairman, as to whether or not we should hear from Indian representatives. I hope I am correct in saying that the feeling is we have made pretty good progress in getting through the bill and hearing the minister on what he had to say. There is some considerable time before the session might be expected to adjourn in view of other legislation which we know is coming down. With regard to hearing Indian representations, my feeling is still the same as it was at the beginning of the proceedings here: that if for no other reason than to make the Indians feel they have had a fair hearing and that this bill is the best bill that could be produced, I ask for a full consultation with them. We should hear from the Indians. My recollection of the motion that was presented and amended at the first meeting is that the consideration of that matter be deferred until after we hear from the minister. That has now been concluded and I think it is time now to go back to the original motion. For reasons I have said, and without repeating them, I think we should hear from the Indians, and I am prepared to submit a similar motion to that which was submitted at the beginning.

Mr. APPLEWHAITE: I wonder if I might ask the minister a deliberately leading question? If he declines to answer it will be all right. I wonder if the minister would give an undertaking that within a reasonable time after this Act has gone into operation—and I would say roughly not less than one year and not more than three full years—if he would undertake to hold a conference somewhat similar to the one held at the end of February, of Indians, representative Indians, to go over the Act and its working, with a view to discussing the Act as it has been found to operate, and that he would undertake to do that whether or not a parliamentary committee should be appointed?

Hon. Mr. HARRIS: Well, at the conference, and I think I mentioned this in my opening statement, the question was raised as to whether this conference should become an annual affair. I pointed out that I thought we ought to have a period of time in which to give the new bill a chance to operate and show its advantages or disadvantages and I suggested that one year would not be sufficient for that purpose. I went further and I said that in my opinion two years, or about that time, would probably show that certain amendments might be required; but, of course, I said we could make any amendments in the meantime that appeared desirable. Now, I did not go the step further, and tell the conference that they would be re-assembled in two years' time. But I am prepared to give the committee the assurance, within the limits stated by Mr. Applewhaite, that it would be the intention of this government to invite representative Indians to another conference similar to that held in February last.

Mr. CHARLTON: Now, Mr. Chairman, in saying this I do not mean anything personal as applied to the minister; but I still believe there are enough new powers in this bill that the Indians should be allowed to come here and appear before this committee before this bill is allowed to operate because there are powers in this bill, as you well know, that before the two year period is up will result in certain things being done which would be decidedly against the interest of the Indians; so, without any reflection on the minister in any way, I think something should be done to get their views at this time. I think it is only fair, to alleviate further suspicion on the part of the Indians, that they should be given an opportunity of coming here now and telling us their views, explaining how they feel regarding this new Act.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you realize this, Mr. Charlton? That you have been on the committee since it was first set up in 1946, and I believe that I am right in my recollection that you were on it in 1947 and 1948. As you will also recall, we did hear Indians from one coast to the other and we also visited—a