

Mr. ROSS (St. Paul's): I resent the remark made by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggarr (Mr. Coldwell) that the Indians seem to be treated in some inferior way. It is a reflection on those who have to do with Indians. For many years I have known an Indian settlement in the Georgian bay, and as a matter of fact I have tried to get the Minister of Transport to put some buoys in the bay to make it easier for them. There is a summer resort, and there are many settlers and Indians there. The Indians are a fine people, and the citizens of this country have the greatest respect for them. It is a reflection on the Canadian people to say that the Indians in Canada are not treated like human beings.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: The condition in regard to the Indians on some of the reservations in Saskatchewan are far from satisfactory. Economic conditions on some of the reserves are deplorable, and there seems to be very few people to espouse their cause. The first thing wrong with the administration, it seems to me, is want of appreciation of the fact that the Indians are not all naturally adapted to farming, and it is useless to try to make them self-sustaining on farms when they are not capable of learning agriculture. Many of them have tried to follow the instructions given, but their farming operations are not successful. They have a certain natural ability along other lines, but their talents are not properly developed. It was the intention of the department in setting aside these reserves that opportunity should be given for the Indians to make their living, in part at least, by trapping and fishing, but the recent drought conditions have practically depleted those areas of fur-bearing animals, and fishing as an industry among the Indians is gradually petering out. The educational facilities on the reserves need a complete overhauling. The Indians complain that the children do not receive the kind of education in the residential schools which they would like, and they would much prefer to have the children left at home and provided with such educational facilities as the ordinary day schools afford, as was intended in the treaties.

There is a most deplorable condition resulting from the manner in which the reserves are managed. Indians living on the reserves, not full-blooded, may be evicted if the man in charge has reason to evict them. They have no means of earning a living, and therefore they become squatters along the edge of the reserves. Along the Gordon reserve in Yorkton these people are the responsibility of no one. The provincial government takes no responsibility for them and the federal government

[Mr. Crerar.]

likewise repudiates responsibility, the result being that the condition of the Indians there is comparable with that of those found among the share-croppers of the southern states. Social and economic conditions are frightful. In past years a good many of these Indians have tried to eke out an existence on the reserve by working for farmers in the neighbouring district. But economic conditions among those farmers are such that they cannot pay decent wages, so that the Indians are finding it increasingly difficult to make a living. They are now trying to haul wood off the reserve into the town in order to make some money. I repeat, the whole condition of the Indians, so far as my constituency is concerned, is far from satisfactory, and a new approach is necessary.

I understand that the department is doing something on a large scale in the line of fur farming and the development of certain natural areas where the Indians can carry on muskrat farming on a scientific basis. These farms have been successful. The Indians show an aptitude for that kind of thing and have found it a great deal better to carry on work along that line.

There is, I believe, need for some change in the department to meet the changing conditions in that western land where these Indians are being kept on the reserves. Drastic action is needed. I have brought this matter to the attention of the authorities in the department on a number of occasions and have had some investigation and a little improvement, but what has been done has not solved the problem by any means. The matter must be gone into, and I should like to have a statement from the minister as to what he intends to do.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Carried.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: I would ask the minister for a statement on the condition of affairs in the reserves, particularly the Gordon reserve.

Mr. CRERAR: I do not know that I can give my hon. friend any precise information about any particular reserve he has in mind. The Indian problem is one that has to be viewed as a whole. It is a slow, patient, difficult business in which to make headway, and that difficulty, frankly, is due in the main to the characteristics of the Indians themselves. I do not think the charge can be levelled against the people of Canada that they are wholly indifferent to the welfare of the Indians.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: I did not say that.

Mr. CRERAR: The size of the vote we have here is an indication of the interest which