

Suggested National Indian Day

Certainly the present act is completely outdated so far as the people I represent are concerned. The act is holding back development in my area because we find, for example, that our local Indians are unable to have their own police force, they are unable to set up a municipal type government that will serve them so much better than the present one, they are unable really to take over control of their own reserve, which in the case of my constituency would be the best solution. Caughnawaga is quite capable of looking after its own affairs but the present Indian Act prevents the Indians there from so doing.

It is my hope that with wholesale changes in the Indian Act, with the change in emphasis from paternalism to self-help, with stress on a national Indian day, a national Indian week, stress on the richness of the Indian culture that exists in this country, we will very soon have a completely different Indian in this country. We will have an Indian who will feel completely self-confident but will remain completely Indian, one who will be able to go out into our economy and earn a living that is as good as that of any other Canadian citizen but will at the same time feel free to go back and enjoy the life, the hunting and fishing on his own reserve. We will have an Indian who can combine the best of both worlds. His world is a good one but the world in which we live is a good one too and there must be some adjustment between the two.

I am confident that the Canadian Indian is capable of finding the role that will enable him to enjoy the best of both worlds. It is my earnest hope, and one that I am confident is shared by all hon. members, that not only will our Indian peoples be able to preserve their various cultures but as they assume a full role in our economic and social life there will occur a flowering of the many Indian cultures in Canada in a way that will enrich our national fabric.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the long dissertation of the hon. member for Châteauguay-Huntingdon-Laprairie (Mr. Watson) I wonder whether enough time is available for a vote on this motion. I think it is imperative that this motion, if no other during this parliament, should be the subject of definitive action by parliament by way of a formal vote on a private member's motion indicating what I [Mr. Watson (Châteauguay-Huntingdon-Laprairie).]

hope will be our unanimous support for the principle and concept of the motion.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Howard: The concept of a national Indian day perhaps had its origin among the native Indian peoples on March 4 and 5, 1965, when at a meeting of the Indian advisory committee to the Centennial Commission the idea was proposed by Mr. Guy Williams who was then and is now the president of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia. I think it is appropriate and coincidental that Mr. Williams is in Ottawa today and is in fact a guest of the House of Commons in the gallery, together with three extremely attractive, young native Indian ladies.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Howard: In the past few years there has been a growing interest among non-Indian people in the affairs of the native Indian population of Canada. There is certainly a growing and developing interest among members of parliament. I have noticed a decided change in that more members have in recent years paid attention to and spoken about Indian affairs than was the case just six or eight years ago. There is also a growing interest by native Indian people in their own affairs, in their own well being, their own stature and progress. This is excellent, because we all know that only from among and within any group of people will come the leaders of that group. They will not come from outside but from inside.

● (5:40 p.m.)

I think the history of the development of Canada shows, even to one who has read it scantily, that our development as a nation is very closely interwoven with the history, development and culture of our native Indian peoples in all parts of the country and that the two are inextricably mixed together in the fabric of this nation. Even though I believe there must be unanimous support for this motion, in my opinion the best way we can, in the words of the motion itself, "recognize their outstanding contributions to our national life" is not exclusively by a national day, a national week or participation in our centennial year. Canada could give them recognition by doing everything possible to help the development of self-government amongst our native Indian people, by doing everything possible to bring about the time when there is no Indian Act, no more