

*Indian Affairs*

was not at any time any indication whatsoever that there would be any constitutional protection for the hereditary, statutory and committed rights of the native Indian peoples. These were ignored. The matter of Indian lands and the inheritance of Indian people in respect of resources, which should have been enshrined in our constitutional law has been ignored so far by the government. This is one of the reasons for disagreement and resentment on the part of the Indian people.

The other reason, generally speaking, is the lack of consultation in the social preparation and the development of the policy declared by the minister on June 25. It is true that there was consultation of a sort prior to that time, and it might be worth while to trace a little bit of the history of this so-called consultation process to indicate why the native people feel they have been cheated and deceived in this regard.

When Mr. Tremblay was the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in a previous government, he announced that the government was going to develop a program involving advisory boards and councils. As a consequence there was established provincial and national councils or advisory boards in respect of Indian affairs. These boards met on numerous occasions and worked out, so far as I know with the minister and subsequent ministers, a program relating to Indian affairs revolving around the Indian Act. This also involved what should be done about historic rights.

The present Minister of Public Works (Mr. Laing), when he was the minister of Indian affairs, not longer ago than December of 1967, announced in this house that as a result of these advisory boards and council meetings he had almost completed a draft of Indian Act changes. I submit this was done with an eye to the then expected federal election of 1968. There was a change of course; almost a disregard of the advisory board and council meetings. The minister then embarked upon a program which he called "consultation", designed to begin just prior to the then expected 1968 election.

It seemed to many of the Indian people who had attended these advisory council and board meetings and worked with the minister in preparing something in which they thought they were participating, that their ideas had been scuttled. The Indian people accepted the concept because they wanted consultative meetings. They agreed to start all over again, to put to the minister what they had been

[Mr. Howard (Skeena).]

saying for years. This culminated in a meeting in Ottawa at the end of April and during the first of May at a national level. The minister went to that meeting and listened, but made no declaration whatsoever except that in respect of the development of ideas and policy that he would make a statement sometime before the end of June. He did so, but at that stage the consultation stopped.

There was no consultation whatsoever with native Indian people about the actual preparation of the document the minister tabled in this house on June 25 of this year, a few weeks ago. Consultation ended when it should have reached its peak; when the crunch was put on and when the real guts of the situation was to be developed. The minister secluded himself with his advisors in whatever private offices he has and developed a policy and program in isolation from the native people, without regard to their feelings or to consultation. The minister has subsequently said the Indian people do not know what they want in this regard; that their opinion is divided.

On April 29 the National Indian Brotherhood, in consort with delegates who were elected to attend that national conference, made a statement to the government of Canada. I will not bother to read it in its entirety, but I want to say they expressed doubts about the course of consultation meetings, and specifically said:

It has been made abundantly clear, both by the consultations to date and through Indian meetings throughout the land, that the principal concerns of Indian people center around;—

They then list four principles as follows:

Recognition of the treaties and the obligations imposed by same;

Recognition of aboriginal rights;

Reconciliation of injustices done by the imposition of restrictions on Indian hunting through the ratification of the migratory birds convention and subsequent federal and provincial legislation;

Claims commission—It is our opinion that before meaningful consultation on amendments to the Indian Act can take place these four items must be dealt with and a position of mutual understanding and commitment reached.

Those are exactly the points the government seems to have missed or ignored. The manner of implementing these programs is also bringing a halt to a great deal of the development which should have taken place and was expected among the Indian people on the Indian reserves. These Indian people are now reluctant to participate in programs of development under the department in respect of such matters as housing, welfare and grants to assist in the economic development