

Supply—Northern Affairs

found that their opportunity as small operators to engage in the lumbering industry or some phase of its seriously constructed when they require to advance into reserve areas where there might be more timber. I think it would certainly be helpful for the economic well-being and progress of the Indian native people if the size of reserves was increased. I would also ask the minister whether he would consider trying to work out a deal with the various provinces in this regard; or perhaps we should try to buy up land, if we can, in order to enlarge the reserves in the interest of the well-being of these people.

The minister mentioned the housing program. This was discussed in the committee, where we obtained from Mr. Battle, the assistant deputy minister, the information regarding the policy with respect to off-reserve homebuilding. This is something which I read into the statement of the minister on March 17, but which in fact was not there. I thought there had already been established, when the minister made his announcement, a policy to provide assistance to our native people to build houses off the reserves. However, this matter is still up in the air. I cannot urge too strongly on the minister the necessity for developing the details of this policy as quickly as possible in order that native people, who desire to partake of the assistance which is made available, may get that assistance at the earliest possible moment. I wish to pose these matters to the minister now because they seek to elicit information which may be helpful to myself and other members of the committee when we deal with some of these matters.

Some time ago I wrote to the minister's predecessor and suggested that an arrangement be made whereby some of the elders or tribal chiefs in the villages be employed on a part-time or ad hoc basis, in conjunction with the Indian day schools, to teach the native language to their own children and to explain its historical concepts and applications. As a result of this teaching the younger generation would come to appreciate their own history, a history which is being quickly forgotten, and a language which is being quickly discarded because in many instances it does not have written form, but is purely oral. I think this would be one way perhaps in which the younger generation would have a better grasp of their own history and, having that better grasp, become prouder of themselves than is the case at the moment.

The answer I received in response to my suggestion was that this subject matter had been referred to a research committee—I think that was the expression used—in the Indian affairs branch. I have heard nothing since then. If the minister has any information readily available he might indicate what has happened to this particular aspect.

Would the minister also tell us about the progress of the feasibility study of the proposed longhouse structure in Prince Rupert about which his predecessor made an announcement last fall during the course of the convention of the native brotherhood of B.C.?

● (4:50 p.m.)

Another item of concern relates to the artistic activities of the Indian people, especially in the field of totemic carvings and designs of this sort. This matter was discussed with one of the minister's predecessors, I have forgotten who at the moment. I received a reply that this matter was being developed and that arrangements could be made for the protection by copyright or some other method of the property of individual artists in order to preserve to the natives their old artistic forms, so that they would not be copied and prostituted in sales, as has been the case with pseudo-argyllite totems which have been for some years mass produced by a chemical, fibreglass or plastic process. The producers take a plastic mould and from that make many forms. There ought to be some method of ensuring that natives' rights are preserved and protected by copyright or by some other way. I would appreciate having some response from the minister about that.

Not long ago I had a bill which was debated for one hour relating to the British Columbia Indian Reserves Mineral Resources Act. I wonder if the minister could explain or announce to the house whether he has had any discussion or correspondence with the provincial government in British Columbia about the alteration of the agreement of 1943 and, if so, what are the prospects of making changes to that particular agreement?

Mr. Southam: Mr. Chairman, I should like to associate myself with the previous speaker in commending the minister for the work he has done respecting the welfare of our Canadian Indian population. I express the hope that the program as outlined will be translated into action as soon as possible.