

*Canada Elections Act*

it provisions which safeguard that right, in fact provisions which spell out that right in no uncertain terms. I think that is another reason why this measure should commend itself to the members of the house at this time. Those of us who live, as I do, in areas where there are quite a number of Indians have been able to observe the results of having the provincial franchise granted to the Indians of our areas. This change in our provincial elections act came into effect in 1949. Certainly as far as I am concerned, all of the results of that change in our provincial elections act have been very encouraging to those of us who are desirous of seeing our native Indian people take their full share of the responsibilities of Canadian citizenship.

It is quite true that there are some places, even within the boundaries of my own constituency, where there are small groups of Indians living in semi-isolation who have not as yet had a great deal of opportunity in the way of education and perhaps more particularly in the field of economic opportunity which would provide them with a standard of living that would enable them to progress. But I feel that an advantage would be the psychological atmosphere—if one were to consider nothing else—which would be created through the adoption of this provision which would make it clear to the Indian people that those of us who now in this country are in a great majority over the original inhabitants are prepared to welcome them as full brothers, that in putting forward this proposal in a sense perhaps we might say we were attempting to atone for the sins of our forefathers in having taken over the country in the manner in which it was taken over. There are, of course, those in British Columbia who assert that they still have not legally surrendered the right to a square inch of the territory of British Columbia to the white population. While that point of view is put forward from time to time from certain quarters, nevertheless I think it is fair to say that the vast majority of the Indian peoples of British Columbia would welcome the opportunity of being able to enter fully into Canadian citizenship.

**Mr. A. R. Smith (Calgary South):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to give qualified support to this motion. I certainly subscribe to its objective or its intent. Many members of this house have had experience—and pleasurable it is—in their association with Indians on the reserve or with those who have become integrated into our society. I have one or two doubts and in putting them forward I am simply reflecting the expression of opinion of the Indians of our province as registered through the Indian association which, after

[Mr. Barnett.]

all, speaks for them; and it would be remiss of me were I not to introduce these doubts of this important body into this discussion.

I naturally support those who have expressed enthusiasm and the desire for complete integration over a period of time of these first citizens. I have had more than casual experience with the young Indian who has been successful in becoming integrated into our society and assuming the responsibility attached thereto. It was, in fact my experience to serve with what I think represented the only complete Indian bomber crew in the R.A.F. who were Canadians, and they were regarded as some of the finest airmen which one of the largest squadrons serving overseas possessed. I do not think it is necessary to remind hon. members of this house that Indians in every walk of life have been successful. They have established themselves as top scientists, as economists and as men of great ability in the educational and engineering field. We take that as a matter of record. But what concerns many who have been associated with the treaty Indian in particular is to see that the treaty Indian enjoys a greater measure of internal self-government than he perhaps experiences today.

I am bound to comment on some of the remarks which were introduced at the annual meeting of the Canadian Bar Association during which a resolution accepted by that important body suggested that one of the best ways by means of which our Canadian Indian would become fully integrated into our society would be by encouraging him to enjoy more active participation in his own affairs on his own reservation.

Many hon. members of this house have unquestionably observed their council meetings. Some may even have been privileged to be elevated to the rank of chieftain in a particular reserve. That is an experience which, if you have enjoyed it, I am sure you will never forget. You cannot help being impressed by the manner in which the Indians have conducted the business of these council meetings. But to my mind one of the unfortunate aspects is that very often, as has already been intimated in this house, an important percentage of the Indians in the reserves do not take part in the activities of this council. Thus I have a basic reason for some reservation with respect to the nature of this motion in that the Indian is suspicious.

He is concerned about being over-regulated and when we go to him and tell him we are going to give him a completely free franchise