

Indian Act

I have negotiated with the department—the department of Indian affairs, as a matter of fact—and I believe they are trying to cope with this difficulty which has arisen unexpectedly under the new policy of the department. In the course of this discussion I should like to know whether any rule has been laid down as to when the Indian becomes responsible for his own medical expenses or when he operates under the system that covered him when he was living on the reserve.

We must realize that there must be a weaning process. You cannot project the Indian into the white man's civilization overnight. He has been living in a world apart for 100 years or so. Suddenly to thrust him into the cold competitive world of the white man is not in the best interests of the emancipation program. The weaning process must be gradual. The Indian, when he gets out into the wider world beyond the reserve, does not have the community supports that the new Canadian has, for example; because there is towards our Indian population a discriminatory attitude that has grown up mainly owing to lack of understanding, mainly owing to stereotypes that have evolved largely because of the fact that the Indian has not been in touch with the white man but has lived apart on the reserve, and the white man has seen him only at such times as he has emerged from the seclusion of the reserve and made a brief contact with the white man's world. It is because of this misunderstanding, Mr. Chairman, that I sometimes feel the problem is more the problem of the white man than that of the Indian.

Speaking just for a moment on this matter of the extension of credit facilities, I should like to say that it would be a fine thing if the Indian could take advantage of the credit facilities that are afforded the ordinary Canadian citizen in connection with farm loans, farm improvement loans and so on. The difficulty is that the Indian does not understand the white man's pecuniary civilization. He has lived in a world apart and he is going to have to be nurtured gradually towards a full position of responsibility as a Canadian citizen. I would certainly support the broadening of credit facilities as announced in the resolution. To repeat once again the broader approach to the problem, I trust that when the legislation is before us, the minister will do something to make amendments in the act and changes in the administration of the act that will deal with some of these difficulties that I have outlined.

Mr. Brown (Brantford): I should like to say a word or two, Mr. Chairman, in support

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of the resolution before the committee. I am pleased to note that, in particular, the minister in his resolution has moved that the act which will be brought before us will provide, amongst other things, that the Minister of Finance may from time to time advance to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration out of the consolidated revenue fund such sums of money as the minister may require for loans to Indians under section 69 of the act.

Then it goes on to say:

The total amount of outstanding advances under the said section not to exceed at any one time one million dollars in lieu of three hundred and fifty thousand dollars as at present.

I think the minister is to be congratulated upon bringing forward this resolution at the present time. I am sure also that whatever changes are made in the Indian Act at this time, they will be changes which will be of lasting benefit to the Indian people.

I am very much interested in this subject because adjoining my constituency is one of the largest Indian reservations in this dominion, if not the largest. I refer to the Six Nations reservation. I cannot emphasize too much, Mr. Chairman, the contribution that the Indian people have made to the development of Canada across the years, a contribution that is written in the pages of Canadian history from the beginning of time so far as this country is concerned. I do not think that we can have enough legislation brought forward to give the Indian people the chance to continue to play that part that they have played in our history over the years. Anything that is brought forward that allows the Indian more privileges, that allows the Indian an opportunity to play his part in our national life, is something I would support with all my heart.

I just want to go back a little bit for a few moments to outline what the Indian people have contributed to the culture and history of Canada. In 1783, as you know, Mr. Chairman, the Indian population in the Mohawk valley of the United States, known as the Six Nation Indians, fought on the side of the British crown. They grew to cherish and love British traditions, which we all love, and as a result these people fought on the side of the British crown at that time. When the American revolution was over, and after a promise from Sir Guy Carleton, governor general of Canada, they came in great numbers to settle on the banks of the Grand river in the province of Ontario, where they have resided ever since. A large strip of land along the Grand river from its source to its mouth was deeded to the Indian people of the Six Nations. Most of that land has been sold, but that large reservation