

*Indian Act*

was a non-treaty Indian and did not follow the Indian mode of life was a citizen of Canada. I should like to be clear on that point.

In the country that has been referred to by my hon. friend from North Timiskaming there are two distinct tribes of Indians who have intermingled. As far as one can learn, originally the Ojibway band, a section of the Algonquin tribe, occupied the height of land and the country south of the height of land and north of the great lakes. The Cree Indians occupied the watershed of Hudson bay and James bay. The Cree Indians in the Hudson bay area were one of the last bands to become treaty Indians; I think some of them did so quite recently. Before they became treaty Indians, however, and before they were recognized by the department in any sense, hundreds of them migrated from the shores of Hudson bay to the line of the Transcontinental railway and further south to the lake shore, and from the day they came to that district, some fifty years ago, they no longer followed the mode of life of the Indian. They stepped right in beside the white man and became citizens of the country, building homes for themselves and taking positions in railroad service, as mechanics and so on. In the town in which I live there is an Indian community living in homes as good as my own. They run locomotives; they have become telegraph operators, machinists and so on. They never have been recognized as Indians in the ordinary sense, as migratory or bush Indians, as we term them, have been recognized. That brings me to the situation referred to by the hon. member for North Timiskaming, where there are two classes of Indians. One of these classes exercise the franchise, and they have always done so, because they have never been recognized as wards of the government. I go a step further. We have a large Indian school three miles from the town in which I live, where the children of treaty Indians are entitled to free education in keeping with an arrangement made throughout Canada with the different denominations of the churches to which the Indians happen to belong. Now, the children of these Cree Indians are not entitled to the privileges of that Indian school, but their parents pay taxes to the public or the separate school as the case may be and they attend the school wherever it is located.

What is the situation with regard to these people? The term "following the Indian mode of life" has been applied to them although they do not follow that mode of life. People

[Mr. Nicholson.]

commonly understand what that mode of life is; it means either that the Indians live on the reserve or that they are taking advantage of the privileges granted them to go hunting and fishing wherever they can. That is a point that should be definitely cleared up.

I come next to the question of the franchise. It is a fact that these Cree Indians have not for half a century followed the Indian mode of life but have lived after the manner of the white man, taking their position side by side with him and accepting all the responsibilities involved. One hon. gentleman referred to Indians who had gone overseas, and I believe I have stated in this house before that you could comb the country from the Mattawa river to the mountain line of Manitoba in 1917 and you could not find an adult Indian of military age and physically fit who had not volunteered to go overseas. But what is the situation when we come to enforce enfranchisement? The state is spending, to my personal knowledge, large sums of money on these Indian schools to train the boys and girls and fit them, not for the Indian mode of life but in order that they may, as their rights and privileges are taken away, and their opportunities disappear, step up alongside you or me or anyone else and take their position as Canadian citizens. But suppose they refuse to do this after all that has been done for them? I personally know of two girls who graduated from the Indian school in Chapleau. They were put through high school by the Indian department, through normal school by the Indian department, and they became qualified as school teachers, so that they are now teaching school in the southern part of Ontario in a settlement where all the children are white. Ultimately these young women will marry. There are men doing the same thing. In Chapleau, a young man, graduate of the Indian school and of the high school, takes a position in a bank or in a store or somewhere else. Should he not assume the responsibilities of citizenship when that has been done for him?

I know the Indians; at least I know two bands of Indians, having lived amongst them, and I know that they will be perfectly satisfied to allow their case to rest in the hands of the Indian department.

Mr. VALLANCE: No, they won't.

Mr. NICHOLSON: I speak only of those I know, and I have had a lot to do with them. All this talk about the Indian department setting up a tribunal that will go among the bands of Indians and take some family and say to them, "You must be enfranchised," is all rot in my opinion. I have had a good deal