

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

I think this branch is on the right track and that it should allow nothing to deviate it from that emphasis.

I was also interested in the remarks made about the vocational training program and the work of the placement officers. On several occasions I have made representations to the minister and her officials stressing the field in which placement officers could work on the coast of British Columbia and what they might accomplish in the way of placing more of the Indians in industry, particularly the logging industry. I myself have had a great deal of experience in hiring them and I have found them to be as satisfactory as is any other type of labour that has been available to us.

I believe that, through the acceptance of responsibility on the part of the Indians and on the part of some of the provincial governments, we are at long last reaching a point that we might call a break-through in connection with this problem of Indian affairs. It must be rather ironic sometimes for members of the staff of the Indian affairs branch to realize that the better the job they do, the sooner they are going to put themselves out of a job. I look forward to the day when the Indian affairs branch will be primarily concerned with over-all arrangements between the federal government and the provinces until such time as the Indians become completely integrated.

I was interested in listening to the remarks of the hon. member for Skeena and the hon. member for Vancouver East in which they brought to the attention of the committee two cases in which they appeared to think there had been an injustice. I should like to take a few minutes in which to explain to the committee the situation that exists in British Columbia and which I do not think many hon. members fully appreciate.

We have something like the 1,620 reservations in British Columbia out of a total 2,200 in the whole of Canada. Most of these reservations are in the coastal area. Almost invariably they are at the mouths of valleys through which is to be found the only route of access to the hinterland. They in a sense completely block access to many industrial sites and to a great deal of our timber and mineral resources. So far there has not been too much difficulty about making arrangements for rights of way and in some cases, for leases for industrial purposes, and perhaps in a few cases for purchase of some of these lands which are in many cases not occupied. I do not know how many of the reservations on the coast are occupied but I know that the percentage must be small.

The hon. member for Skeena took a kind of roundhouse sling at the minister of highways in British Columbia. Of course that is a popular thing to do these days. I do it myself once in a while. However, the fact remains that this is a much greater problem in British Columbia than it is perhaps in any other province of Canada. I refer to the question of rights of way or what some people might refer to as trespass on Indian reserves. It is also quite often a problem in the development of timber and the establishment of pulp and paper mills and where the Indians have land that is in an area suitable for the establishment of such industry they have to be negotiated with. Sometimes it takes a long time to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion and get these industries under way. I sometimes think that perhaps there should be a slightly different policy with regard to dealing with Indian lands in British Columbia as compared with the rest of Canada. It should not be a policy of prejudice or a discriminatory policy but it should be a policy in keeping with a particular situation that exists there. I should think this matter could be given a good deal of thought on the part of the officials of the Indian affairs department and the minister.

In the report of the Indian affairs department I notice that it is stated that there are some 209 bands and 1,623 reservations in British Columbia. Those figures indicate the situation about which I have been speaking. I do not for one minute advocate that the Indians or the rights of the Indians should not be given the maximum consideration. However, I feel that perhaps some agency might be set up that would lead to easier negotiations or perhaps I should say quicker negotiations. Let us not say "easier negotiations" lest some people might interpret those words to mean cheaper rights of way on the part of those that seek them. I hope some consideration will be given to this problem.

Mr. Howard: I listened with interest to the hon. member for Comox-Alberni speak with respect to the land question. Before I deal with that matter, however, I wonder if I may at this stage, initially leave with the minister a question to be answered at her convenience. It relates to the question raised by the hon. member for Wetaskiwin with regard to the liquor situation. Can the minister indicate what is the present state of the resolution passed by certain independent band councils or Indian bands in British Columbia with respect to bringing section 96 (a) (ii) of the Indian Act into force in so far as these reserves are concerned. I posed a query to the minister some time ago on this matter and it was answered by way of a return. However, since that time I understand that subsequent developments have