

Indian Act

—he remarked to me that in his opinion the single, most important thing that requires to be done for his people is to enfranchise them and to do so without depriving them of those, shall we say, relics of privileges to which they are surely entitled as the rightful owners of this land. As Dr. Kelly pointed out, we cannot expect people really to assume the responsibilities of citizenship unless we are going to give them the voice of citizens. To me he expressed the hope that, before many years had gone by, the fears and doubts that exist among some Indians that if they are enfranchised they will lose their rights will have been dissipated by government action and government statements, and that we then may hope to call on these people to assume their proper place in our communities.

The hon. member for Calgary North this afternoon was speaking about the expulsion of Indians from reservations. I think the minister may have been technically correct when he answered the hon. member; but, as a matter of fact, while there may not be actual expulsions, there are cases which have come to my knowledge—and which I have brought to the attention of the department—of Indians whose claims to be members of a certain band and therefore part owners of the reservation property have not been allowed by the department. In one case that I recall, this is because the man's right of inheritance came through his mother which is the traditional Indian way of tracing inheritance. Unfortunately the lady did not go through the formal motions of getting married to which we are accustomed but she was considered to be married in the eyes of her Indian relations. This young man—he is not young now; he is a man well on in the forties—has been denied his position as a member of that band. The department takes the view that he should be considered as a member of his father's band of Indians which is away up the coast on a small island. The Indians feel that this is an interference with their traditional methods of calculating inheritance. Hence while he is not expelled from this reservation, he is not permitted to get control of a piece of property in order to build a house for himself. He is obliged to live with other relatives there rather as a sort of hanger-on.

This whole question of band membership is at present acute among some of the Indians. I hope it is not going to be acute for very long because I hope that their insistence on their rights within reservations will tend to diminish in importance in their own eyes as their liberties expand. However, I think the department might well institute some investigations into the disputes, to which the hon. member for Calgary North referred today,

which occur between Indians of certain bands on the reservations as to who has the right to own some of the reservation and who has not. They finally come down on the department to decide the matter because, as I said earlier, we have destroyed completely their old, traditional social structure which settled these questions under their own terms at that time.

I hope that some of these matters that I have mentioned will be given attention in the legislation that we are going to see. I also hope that legislation has been drafted in consultation with responsible members of the Indian peoples themselves. There is not merely Dr. Peter Kelly but among the Indians there are many competent, well-educated, upright men with good judgment who could give valuable advice to the minister as to how to solve some of the problems of their people. I hope this legislation has been the result of such consultation and that, in consequence, it will meet with the approval of the Indian people.

Mr. Hardie: Mr. Chairman, I rise at this time to bring to the attention of the committee some of the problems facing the Indians who do not live on reservations, particularly those in the Northwest Territories in my constituency. At the outset I should like to concur in the remarks made by the hon. member for Yukon concerning the co-operation and services given by the late Major D. M. McKay and also the present director of Indian affairs, Colonel Jones. Also, when speaking of Indians, I think a tribute should be paid to the missions—both the Anglican and Roman Catholic missions—for the great job they did in the early years in educating and looking after the native Indians. For instance, in my own constituency the first school was built in Fort Providence by the Roman Catholic mission in 1867. Other schools were built by the Anglican and Roman Catholic missions after that time. But from 1867 to 1902 the government paid no attention, and did not put up one nickel for education or health of the native Indians. In 1902 they gave a big grant to these missions, namely 3 cents per day to educate, clothe and feed Indian children. In 1912 they raised that grant to 12 cents; and in 1921, I think it was, they raised it to 50 cents and they have come along with large grants since then. But now in the Northwest Territories the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources have taken over the education of native Indians. A great deal of money has been spent on schools, both vocational and academic. As I have said, a great deal of time is being spent particularly on vocational training, and I agree with this. But, Mr. Chairman, when we speak of vocational training—