

There is one instance of a small coal mine on the Blackfoot Indian reserve in Alberta which is operated by the Indians themselves.

May I return to what I call first things first. What do we do for these people? I spoke to you the other day concerning my fond hopes for the expansion of the fur industry in Canada to the extent where it will much more adequately provide a living for 50 per cent of the total Indian population of Canada as well as for other people who will benefit from the same development. May I elaborate on what I said the other day? How do we propose to do that? I have covered the muskrat program, I think, to the satisfaction of everybody but myself; I am now touching very briefly upon the beaver program. I want to come back to the beaver program, because I feel that I rather left that matter in the air. The plan that I proposed in the mimeographed sheet that I left with you was the establishment, in co-operation with the provinces, of beaver reserves across Canada. You will recall I suggested, and it was only a suggestion, that there might be three in the northwest territories, two in British Columbia, two in each of the prairie provinces, three in the province of Ontario, three in the province of Quebec and possibly three in the maritime provinces. Due to the fact that the ownership of their natural resources is vested in the provinces and that the land over which we will have to operate is in the provinces, this plan can only be accomplished by co-operation with the provinces. I can see no reason why the provinces should not be willing to co-operate in such a plan. These reserves that we would establish would still be open for the trapping of all types of fur, except beaver, in the first instance. Beaver would be rigorously protected for, say, ten years until their stocks reached the point where they would sustain the population without exceeding the annual increase or encroaching on the capital stock. All the Indian would be allowed to take or all the trapper would be allowed to take would be a part of the interest until we get the capital stocks built up again.

Mr. MacNICOL: What is the average life of a beaver?

The WITNESS: I do not know, Mr. MacNicol, but I am told it is anywhere from thirty to fifty years. They have a long life.

You have touched on a point there that gives me some little concern, and that is that if we preserve beaver on one of those preserves for ten years the ones that we started with are going to be very old. We think we know how to handle that situation for the chaps in northern Ontario and northern Quebec where the trench method is followed and where they actually can select the animals which are taken, by hand, alive. They are not caught in steel traps or fancy traps, they are caught by the tail by hand.

Mr. MacNICOL: Don't they bite?

The WITNESS: No, they are too stiff in the body, they cannot turn around. If they are caught by the tail they cannot bite.

Mr. RICKARD: Can you tell how old they are?

The WITNESS: The experienced trapper knows from his general experience whether a beaver is old or young by the size of it. Beavers will run on the average about 30 pounds a carcass. I have heard of one instance of a beaver that was taken at Rupert House that weighed over 100 pounds; it was old. They do not get their growth for five or ten years, but under this trench method where they take the live animal in their hands they can let it go again if it is a female or if it is young and immature. When the Hudson Bay Company took 1,800 beaver at the Rupert river reserve the fur auction at Montreal said that they were the most marvellous group of beaver that had ever been shown. They were all either blankets or extra large, and the reason for that is that when they take the beaver by the trench method the Indians select them.

Mr. MacNICOL: What do you mean by the trench method?