

*Supply—Citizenship and Immigration*

closed doors and I do not know that they will ever know. But certainly they should be fully advised if any similar conferences are held in the future. Regardless of the expressions of view of certain provinces the minister should insist, in his position as minister responsible for the provisions in the British North America Act concerning Indians and the land reserved for Indians, that any future conferences should be open, and that the native Indian people should be able to sit in on, participate in and listen to what is taking place with respect to their rights and freedoms. Because, as I said earlier, these native people are not statistics or taxes or cold, inanimate objects; they are human beings for whom we should have a far higher regard than was the case with this particular dominion-provincial conference.

Incidentally a suggestion was made in connection with conferences which I think the minister should reject or say something about. This was the position taken by the province of Quebec—what the other provinces said I cannot say at this stage:

The Quebec delegation believes in the need for future federal-provincial conferences following the present one.

In our opinion, these conferences should be held not only between ministers but also between the senior officials.

It could be left to the federal government to convene these conferences but, in our mind, the provinces should play an active part in their preparation and especially in setting up their agenda.

I suggest to the minister that even though Quebec is his own province he should reject that sort of proposal, because all it does is carry on the proposition that these conferences which take place in secret represent the form of conference which should be followed in the future. The minister should tell the native people that he made an error in holding this last conference behind closed doors, excluding the native Indian people from it, that he does not wish to repeat that error at any future conference, and that so far as his government is concerned future conferences will be open to the native people.

It is true that following the conference, both as the communiqué mentioned and as the minister himself said in reply to questions in this chamber on November 22, there have been continual references to the idea that consultation should take place with the Indian people before anything is done. I submit that consultation will mean relatively little to the Indian people unless they are told fully, openly and honestly what the positions are that were taken by the respective

provincial governments behind those closed doors.

The proposition is being held out to these native people that they might be in a better position by accepting the jurisdiction of the various provincial governments. One of the things the native people will be concerned about before accepting that proposition is the attitude adopted by this, that or any other provincial government. They do not know what that attitude is and they will not be able to discover the attitude expressed at these conferences. How are the native people going to know what the position was that was taken by the province of Quebec at that conference? How are they going to know what are the proposals the province of Quebec put forward at those discussions? How are the native people in Alberta going to know what the government of Alberta proposed at that conference? If the minister continues to say that what went on at that conference is privileged and cannot be disclosed, then the native people will never find out.

I do not intend to single out the province of Quebec, but I do happen to have some information about the representations it made at that conference. I should like to refer to one other proposal made by that province about education, and this is of vital concern to the native people of the province of Quebec. This will also be of concern to the native people of other provinces, if a similar proposal was put forward by other provincial governments. Let me read part of this proposal:

The province of Quebec gladly accepts the proposal of the federal government to the effect that, when feasible, the Indian reservations be incorporated in the school districts of the province, providing, evidently, that the Indians contribute, one way or another, their fair share toward educational costs.

When reading between the lines, what does that mean to the Canadian native people? I do not intend to give my interpretation of it, but shall state only what the native people feel and fear as a result of this proposal. They are afraid their Indian reserves will be incorporated in the school districts, and a land tax immediately imposed for educational purposes. These lands will then be liable to seizure and sale, if the native people are unable to meet the school taxation which might be levied.

The minister did say that there was a protection in this regard in the British North America Act. I wish he would expand on that and indicate where that protection is, or what led him to that conclusion. There is a

[Mr. Howard.]