

*The Address—Mr. Burton*

the rural area of Regina East are capable, industrious and diverse in their backgrounds.

It is a great honour for me to have the privilege of having in my constituency eight Indian reserves with a resident population of some 3,000 people. In addition, there are also several Métis communities and there are a significant number of Indian and Métis people living in the city of Regina.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words with respect to the problems faced by Indian and Métis people and our responsibilities as legislators in dealing with these problems. I have had a good deal of contact with some of these problems over the past few years and it is my conviction that we need to approach them with a sense of urgency and a sensitivity for their basic nature.

I have visited a great many of the homes on the Indian reserves in my constituency and, as many other members have also experienced, have been appalled by some of the living conditions encountered. I have also been disturbed on many occasions by the attitude and response of people in the rest of the community. References have often been made, Mr. Speaker, to the need for greater education of Indian and Métis people. I think we also need to be reminded of the very great need for educating the non-Indian community to the nature of the situation.

I have seen many examples of Indian and Métis people who have made an outstanding success of their lives, by any standard. On the other hand, I have also seen many cases where these people have experienced a great deal of difficulty in coping with present day problems under the circumstances which have prevailed.

Many of the people in the Indian and Métis communities in the rural areas of Saskatchewan have joined the rural-urban trek and have taken up residence in the city of Regina or other large urban centres in our province. Some of these people have coped quite successfully with the transition from rural to urban living. Others, however, have faced very serious problems. They have come into a city such as Regina with very little resources, limited education and have had to face a community attitude which still results in many subtle forms of discrimination in spite of progress made in legal safeguards of rights. Consequently, many of these people have been shunted from pillar to post and have found a great deal of difficulty in

achieving any sort of a stable life in an urban setting. A potential problem exists in that these people will naturally tend to look to each other for companionship and security in the face of community attitudes. They will tend to congregate together in the same houses and apartment blocks. This, Mr. Speaker, I am sure will be recognized as the beginning of a ghetto. This is the type of thing we must avoid if we are to prevent some of the problems which have been faced in other places.

It is good to know that the present Indian Act is under review and I hope that some useful results will be achieved from this review. However, I hope that what is achieved is something more than just an ironing out of some of the present administrative red tape or the removing of some of the legal disabilities under which Indian people presently live or the making of some improvements in social and economic opportunities. I say this, Mr. Speaker, because I feel that what is needed is a fundamentally new approach to this problem. All of us in Canada have to face up to the responsibility that Indian people are a group of people who were essentially dispossessed of the land they once knew as their own. They have been regarded as second class citizens in our society for many years.

If we are to achieve any sort of fundamental change in the situation, we must clearly establish some of the principles that will apply to future policies.

First, it must be recognized that Indian people have the right of self-determination. The implications of this principle are that not only does it give Indian people the full right of integration into the community and society as we know it, but also that it gives them the right to live their own existence as they wish to live it. The right to make their own decisions must be recognized. Second, we must recognize commitments made by Canada as a nation to Indian people. This involves full recognition of commitments regarding land, health, and other services. These rights need to be honoured as long as the Indian people collectively and individually wish to retain them. Third, we need to get away from the centralized control and administration which has for too long featured our Indian affairs programs. Many hon. members will be aware of some of the incredible stories involved in the centralized control and bureaucracy which Indian people encounter at every turn and in almost every day of their life. It is