

# Our Brothers

Although much public attention has recently been focused on Edgar Benson's **White paper on taxation**, there has been another white paper presented by the government, the **white paper on indian policy**, which is worthy of equal consideration by the Canadian public.

This White Paper is important in the first place sample because it proposes to legislate out of existence the roughly half-million registered and non-registered Indians in Canada, a policy that has led to the charge of "cultural genocide" from many Indian spokesmen.

Secondly, it is of great importance because it provides a classic example of how western, liberal governments forever fail to arrive at real solutions to the problems they face because they are unable to comprehend, or admit, the true nature of the society in which they exist.

The White paper on indian policy does not appear as a monstrous, immoral plan for the elimination of the Canadian Indian population.

Rather, it is more subtle. The government admits, albeit quite paternalistically that the Indian population of Canada is faced with grave problems; an incredibly high infant mortality rate, an average annual income of less than \$2,000; a life expectancy drastically less than that of white Canadians, and more.

The government also agrees that something must be done about these problems. Thus presents the white paper, cloaked in liberal sentiments, as the "final solution" to the Indian problem.

On the face of it then, there is nothing blatantly immoral about the government's intentions. But given the massive Indian outcry against this policy, it would seem obvious that something, somewhere, has gone wrong.

What is needed, then, is an examination of some of the significant passages of the government paper to see just where the problem arises.

## LEGALITY DOESN'T MAKE POWER

The government opens the white paper by stating:

To be an Indian is to be a man, with all a man's needs and abilities.

This fatuous beginning sets the tone for the government's condescending approach to the Indian's problems throughout the paper. Of course the Indian is a man. Did anyone doubt that he was a human being? But the government seems to feel the need to reassure the Canadian population that Indians are people.

To be an Indian is to lack power — the power to act as owner of your lands, the power to spend your own money and, too often, the power to change your own conditions.

This again states the obvious; if the Indian had political power, then he would have no need for the government's special legislation.

But more importantly, this admission damages the government's contention that all the Indian needs is equality under the law.

Simple legal equality cannot ever guarantee the political power that the government admits the Indian lacks.

Not always, but too often, to be an Indian is to be without — without a job, a good house, or running water; without knowledge, training or technical skill and, above all, without those feelings of dignity and self-confidence that a man must have if he is to walk with his head held high.

What is important about this passage is that it exposes the government's euro-centric conception of culture; thus the government believes that

running water and good houses form the basis of all culture, without examining the indian idea of culture apart from these material things.

All these conditions of the Indians are the product of history and have nothing to do with their abilities and capacities.

This passage is crucial to the whole government argument, for by attributing the Indians' problems to an abstract entity called "history", the government mystifies the situation.

History does not produce things, men do. And the men who produced the problems of the Indians were the white men. Thus one would think that Indians might have a legitimate claim against white society for reparations for past wrongs.

However, by attributing these wrongs to "history", the Government precludes the possibility of such a claim. **Indian relations with other Canadians began with special treatment by government and society, and special treatment has been the rule since Europeans first settled in Canada. Special treatment has made of the Indians a community disadvantaged and apart.**

This passage presents the second main point of the government's argument, and it is equally as misleading as the previous one.

Special treatment did not make the Indians disadvantaged. It was only a harmful special treatment that did this — that is, the murdering of Indians and theft of indian lands by white men.

But the remedy for this negative "special treatment" is not the abolition of special treatment, but rather the institution of **positive** treatment.

Now the Indians have been reduced to a disadvantaged status, the solution to the problem is not to suddenly decide to treat them as equals without first raising them up to real equal economic status. Rather, what is required is positive special treatment, which would first provide Indians with a material basis of equality before engaging in empty egalitarian rhetoric.

This proposal is a recognition of the necessity made plain in a year's intensive discussions with Indian people throughout Canada.

This passage makes a factual claim which simply does not seem to be true.

The "intensive discussions" consisted of brief meetings with various indian bands; at no time were the indian organizations and brotherhoods consulted. And the government's claim that this policy is a "recognition" of needs brought out in these "discussions" is belied by the fact that the major point of the policy is the abolition of indian reserves; yet this was not mentioned in any of the Indians consultations hearings.

The policies proposed recognize the simple reality that the separate legal status of Indians and the policies which have flowed from it have kept the Indian people apart from and behind other Canadians.

This sample restates the government argument that special (or separate) treatment has created the Indians' problems. And as seen above, this is not the case; oppression and exploitation at the hands of the white man has done this. The remedy for this is not simply to stop the oppression, but to repair the past wrongs, as much as possible, perhaps in the form of reparations.

In recent years there has been a rapid increase in the Indian population. Their health and education levels have improved. There has been a corresponding rise in expectations that the structure of separate treatment cannot meet.

This claim is simply not true. As a matter of fact, the Indian mortality rate has increased by six percent over the last three years.

What is needed is immediate attention to the problem (that is, special treatment of some sort) not the governmental formula of treating everyone equally without provision for special need.

## PARTNERSHIPS ARE RELATIVE

The Government states that it: seeks a partnership to achieve a better goal. The partners in this search are the Indian people, the governments of the provinces, the Canadian community as a whole and the Government of Canada. As all partnerships do, this will require consultation, negotiation, give and take, and co-operation if it is to succeed.

But unequal partners, operating from unequal economic bases, soon find that their partnership dissolves into a single-partnership, as the larger partner dominates and overwhelms the lesser. For a true partnership, the material basis of equality must first be provided.

Governments can set examples but they cannot change the hearts of men.

This statement is simply false, as any observer of modern mass media's ties with governments will well know.

Indian people must be persuaded, must persuade themselves, that this path will lead them to a fuller and richer life.

This statement seems out of place in a paper supposedly offering a tentative policy for consideration, and it contradicts the government's assertion that the "hearts of men cannot be changed." If the government claims that Indians

must be persuaded, it would seem the policy decision has already been made, and that the only task left is to implement it. This seems to be a long way from the stated government reliance on consultations, discussion, and meetings with the indian people to determine their future.

If indian people are to become full members of Canadian society they must be warmly welcomed by that society.

This again shows the euro-centric outlook of the government, since it places the burden of acceptance on the white members of that society. Nowhere is it mentioned that the Indians might not wish to join our white society.

The policy rests upon the fundamental right of indian people to full and equal participation in the cultural, social, economic and political life of Canada.

To argue against this right is to argue for discrimination, isolation and separation.

Again the government states its fundamental position on the Indians' problems; namely that they must be integrated into Canadian society. Of course, the government does not state just how "full and equal" this participation in Canadian life will be if no special treatment is given to Indians.

We may easily foresee the Indians being forced to give up what assistance they now receive and instead rely on welfare, but other than this the government seems to have little to offer.

And of course, to argue against the government is not to argue for reparations to first enable the Indians to achieve economic equality before taking away their treaty rights.

No Canadian should be excluded from participation in community life, and none should expect to withdraw and still enjoy the benefits that flow to those who participate.

This could be the giveaway to the government's reason for this policy. What is brought up here is the question of taxes.

The government is saying that it will not provide services for people who are not in a position to pay taxes. And this is crucial, not so much in the form of income taxes (since most Indians do not make enough money to pay such taxes), but in the form of land tax, which will certainly affect the Indians drastically once the reserves are broken up.

## HAMBURGER IS EXPENSIVE

With this, the government concludes its basic

arguments for the policy, the specific points:

**Legislative discrimination**

Canada cannot discriminate against its own people. Government believes in self-evaluation.

It is all very well to wish the Indians to be free of discrimination, but unless the fundamental discrimination is removed, it will not affect the economy.

And this will bring Indians to the well.

As blacks in the United States do not get out, t... at a lunch counter, it is not possible if one

Also, the government has admitted that it is not providing some protection for Indian during his proposed government will not meager protection fulfillment of the

2. There must be recognition of the unique Canadian society.

This is a basic principle of the Indian society. It does the Indians to be their contribution to society still continuing to exploit them.

3. Services must be provided to the Indian and from the same as Canadians.

This is an undoubted fact. It has been shown many times that separate services. The argument about the need of co

It is right.

Here again, the government is not providing the fundamental assumptions at equal necessity for the justice.

But as pointed out, this is the case. Equal treatment is only

case of equal need. The Indian is the great. Also implicit is the common services provided for non-Indian people in the past. A welfare with any familiar case. you, this is surely a case.

One significant thing is the case of these people, although provided with the minimal Canadians, are generally in a situation that is behind

4. Those who are behind most.

This is a contradiction. The government's previous about does not provide a solution behind.

Rather, given the principle of the help be seen as welfare by poor (the furthest behind) this so witness that he is helped

## RED LANDS

An important intention may be deduced from the passage:

Private investment capital for projects pledged as security

American companies are developing of Canadian Mid-Canada Development Corporation cannot do so as long as that area are protected from government, as is the Act.

However, once protection, as it provides the Indian lands security for development