

Supply—Indian Affairs Branch

Medical.

162. Indian hospitals and general care of Indians, \$1,442,217.

163. Grants to hospitals, \$4,320.

Welfare and training.

164. Welfare of Indians, \$967,374.

165. Indian education, \$500,616.

166. Grants to residential schools, \$1,398,944.

167. Grants to agricultural exhibitions and Indian fairs, as detailed in the estimates, \$6,870.

168. Grant to provide for additional services to Indians of British Columbia, \$100,000.

Mr. MacNICOL: During the last few years it has been my pleasure to call at quite a number of Indian reservations. On every occasion I made the best inquiry I could into the administration of Indian affairs, to learn what could be done to improve the lot of the Indians from the educational, health and vocational points of view. More and more I am impressed with two phrases which we have had with us for a long time, namely, "lo, the poor Indian!" and, "the noble red man." I have had the pleasure of travelling with Indian guides on many occasions for many days at a time. I cannot now, in the moment or two I am going to take, say all I should like to say about Indian administration. I can say this, that I heard in numerous places that since Doctor McGill became the head of the branch there has been a considerable improvement in the administration; and for that I am glad.

As I travel round I can see that there is yet a great opportunity to do better for our Indian wards, to make their lot in life better than it is. I am afraid that many reserves are so remote that they are not investigated as often as they should be. It takes time to visit them. I engaged a small diesel-driven boat, with guides, an engineer, and a wheelsman, at considerable expense, to take me to visit certain reservations on a northwest Ontario lake. I do not think I need mention the reserves or the lakes, but I shall relate one or two examples of what I found.

First, as to the habitations. We vote large sums of money for Indian administration, and as a white man I am shocked and ashamed at what I have seen of the housing conditions of Indians on certain reserves. If we were not supposed to assist them and develop their manner of life, it would be a different matter, but that is the obligation of the white man. He has, to a very large extent, taken their lands away from them. He has given them reserves, and he undertakes to direct them and look after them. There is a great opportunity to improve their lot.

I should like to have a parliamentary committee set up, say at the next session. I make no reflection on the department, which probably is doing all that has been done before,

[The Chairman.]

and, as I said a few moments ago, is improving on it. But I think we should have a committee, with power to call witnesses, including Indian agents and the occasional chief, not with the intention of finding fault or criticizing, but with the sole desire of improving the lot of the Indians.

I have visited a number of reserves in the United States, and I find that both federal and state governments have done a great deal for the Indians. They have gone so far that they are now discussing giving them representation in the legislatures. For a long time the Maoris of New Zealand have had representation in the legislature of that dominion, and the south African government has now provided representation for its coloured people. Perhaps it would be a good thing if we had someone—how he would be elected or selected I do not know—to represent in this house our Indian people and be a spokesman on their behalf.

I recall one of dozens of habitations which I visited in northern Ontario. Upon measuring it, I found that it was twelve feet by fifteen feet. There were twelve Indian folks living in that house, and only two bunks. Therefore, undoubtedly some of them had to sleep on the floor. In many places one could see out through the roof. The smoke pipe where it went through the roof had no tin round it to prevent fires.

The Indians are our wards and we should take proper care of them. I am interested in the welfare of the noble red man—and he is a noble man, from what I have seen of him, even though some are not quite what we should like them to be. For that matter, however, I suppose they are no worse than many of our own people. Some years ago an estimate about a hospital on a reservation was going through the house, and we were told that the hospital on the reservation had cost \$7,000. I went to see it and I found it was not a hospital at all. At the time I called, it was filled with hay and the walls were bursting from the pressure of the hay on every side. Indian money had likely been used to build that so-called hospital and it was not completed.

Mr. CRERAR: Where was that?

Mr. MacNICOL: On lake Nipigon, Gull river reservation. I did not intend to mention any reservation. I find that the cost of medical services, hospital and drugs, is excessive for the Indians, when one takes into consideration the number of Indians there are and the cost on the reservation I have in mind. I have here the facts with regard to a certain agency, and I find that medical expenses and expenses for hospital,