

Suggested National Indian Day

awareness of the part they have played in our history and which I believe they will play increasingly in the future.

Mr. Enns: Would the hon. member agree that the Indians themselves should be allowed to take the initiative in planning such a day and that the government should be invited to lend some financial support in the promotion of these activities?

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria): Certainly. I think the Indian people, possibly the national advisory Indian commission, should be consulted on all phases of this proposal. We should certainly work in close co-operation with them and I believe the government should definitely provide funds for a project of this type.

Mr. Ian Watson (Châteauguay-Huntingdon-Laprairie): Mr. Speaker, I rise to express support for the initiative which has been shown by the hon. member for Cape Breton North and Victoria (Mr. Muir) in putting forward this resolution. I believe this is indicative of the complete support which he will find for his resolution among members of all parties. I think his idea is an excellent one. Perhaps, as has been suggested by the Canadian Indian Youth Council, we might incorporate a national Indian day as the culmination of a national Indian week.

A national Indian week would be a build-up and would focus attention on activities which I believe should be spread over a few days because all of them could not be packed into a single day. It should become an annual event and our centennial would provide us with reason to initiate it next year.

I have received a couple of suggestions about the timing of such a week. It seems that the second or third week of August would be the most satisfactory time each year. For example, during that period this year the National Indian Council will hold its annual conference, and about the same time there will be the Fort Qu'Appelle powwow. I think the various Indian tribal and provincial organizations could co-ordinate their activities around such a proposed national Indian week.

Quite frankly I prefer the idea of a national Indian week because it would arouse more attention than a single day's events. There are other reasons for suggesting a period of a week. Many exhibitions are held in various parts of Canada around the middle of August

[Mr. Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria).]

and they would provide a good setting for many Indian activities. There could be exhibitions of Indian handicrafts and dancing, but more than that the exhibitions would provide meeting places for Indians all across Canada.

• (5:20 p.m.)

Personally, I should like to see more stress placed on the future role of young Indians in Canada. I think we tend to stress the past too much when we speak about our Indians; it is the future which certainly is most important. With most of our Indian population under the age of 25 I think it is essential that national Indian day or national Indian week be used to provide our Indian youngsters who are just about to emerge into the Canadian mainstream of life with some idea of how they can fit into this life.

Since I have indicated my support for the proposal of the hon. member for Cape Breton North and Victoria, I would hope that he and other members would support an idea which has been circulating among various Indian groups in Canada for some time now. I refer to the formation of a national Indian dance troupe. There is no question in my mind but that such a dance troupe could bring about a flowering of Indian talent in Canada. If it were well run I think it could become self-sufficient fairly quickly and at least at the international level I think it could attain a fame which perhaps even our national ballet could not.

In the minds of most Europeans Canada is still associated with Indians more than the United States is, and I believe this is a good thing. Some people think it is a poor image for Canada to have in Europe but I think the reverse is true. I believe it is an excellent thing and we should capitalize on it. I believe an Indian dance troupe most certainly could act in the role of a Canadian ambassador abroad and would stir even more interest in our country among Europeans.

In my own constituency where Caughnawaga and St. Regis reserves are located, because of the world exhibition in Montreal the centennial year naturally is creating much interest. There are now fairly well advanced plans at Caughnawaga to receive Indians from across Canada. A residential village is planned and the people of Caughnawaga hope to play host to Indians from across Canada who will be attending the world exhibition and participating in it.

A month or two ago I was extremely happy to discover that our government had decided