

*Indian Act*

school is going to split the reserve on denominational lines. The chief of that particular reserve admits, in a letter I have before me, to the need for religious instruction in the curriculum of the residential schools because of the separation of the children from their parents, but he feels that a closer family integration would be achieved if in the new emphasis in the reserves religious instruction were made the responsibility of the churches and the chapels on the reserve, and also if the responsibility were placed upon the parents of the Indian children.

From statements of the minister that I have been able to gather together, I know that he is aware of this difficulty that any beneficial effect that might be obtained from establishing day schools is going to be negated if it is going to split the reserves on denominational lines. In a speech before the Young Men's Canadian Club in Toronto on February 1 of this year the minister said he hoped the day will come when Indian schools are abolished completely in favour of the system where all children will sit in the same classrooms. That is an objective that is to be devoutly wished for but, of course, it is a long way off as yet.

An experiment has been going on, on an increasing scale and on a successful basis, I feel, of allowing the children on the reserves to attend the ordinary high schools in the community and mingle with the rest of the population. That is the beginning of the program that the minister announced in his speech before the Young Men's Canadian Club. Education is the solution for decades of segregation; if integration and the breakdown of isolation are going to be eventually achieved, it is going to be through education, and we must avoid the pitfalls that were in the residential school approach to the education of Canada's first citizens.

There is another query I should like to raise at this time arising from the new emphasis in the department. I refer to the attempt to give the Indian wider responsibility in the conduct of his own personal affairs in the community life of the reserve by means of elected councils. This again is an excellent idea. But here the reserves are running into difficulty because the Indians themselves are not quite capable of handling the electoral system. They get the idea that, under the new system, they are to have the absolute say as to what should take place on the reserves. On the other hand, the superintendent or the agent tends to feel that the Indian is not yet capable of looking after his own destiny. Hence, a conflict of interests arises.

This matter, of course, is connected with the question of enfranchisement of the Indian.

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

I agree with the hon. member for Nanaimo that the Indian should be given the vote just as soon as possible. In many cases the Indian in Canada is ready for the vote. It would provide an incentive for his personal development. It would provide a new sense of responsibility that would help to break down the feeling of inferiority that is part of the Indian's personality as a result of long years of discrimination and segregation on the part of the conquering white man.

In dealing with this problem, an educational program must be carried out. The Indian councillor, the Indian chief or the Indian mayor must have closer supervision if he is to handle his own affairs successfully without getting into the difficulties that have already occurred on the reserves in my own area; and I would imagine the same situation obtains on other reserves operating under a similar scheme. I have also run into another difficulty. The Indian chief and his councillors are coming in contact with some of the less savoury aspects of the white man's public affairs. He is encountering petty patronage and such things as preferred lists and so forth. I am constantly receiving complaints that the Indian is being forced to take relief vouchers and to deal with a particular business because it is on the preferred list or because some petty patronage is involved. That is education of the negative kind and I am sure it will not assist our Indians in understanding the true purpose of the democratic process.

Another difficulty that has come to my attention under this new policy of the department is the responsibility for health services. Mr. Chairman, I am getting a signal from the Minister of National Health and Welfare. I suppose this comes under his jurisdiction more than it does that of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I believe.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** It is therefore entirely out of order.

**Mr. Harkness:** You tried that once and it did not work.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Oh, it is hopeless to get anyone to obey the rules.

**Mrs. Fairclough:** Listen to who is talking.

**Mr. Dinsdale:** The Indian is being encouraged to leave the reserve and to take on the full rights of citizenship. That is all to the good. On the other hand, he is finding that as soon as he leaves the reserve and incurs any medical expenses he is faced with medical bills of \$200 or \$300; and any incentive to emancipate himself from the reserve is lost once he is confronted with financial obligations of that kind.