

Indian Affairs

point in this house. I did not hear the Prime Minister make a reply to the question and he did not rise in his place, but *Hansard* has reported him as having said:

Not only is it not in order; it is very low.

I fully admit it was not a nice question. In fact, it was a nasty question and it was deliberately nasty. I feel it was justified under the circumstances. I want now to raise this question about just who and what is low. The point I am really attempting to make, in the hope that the Prime Minister might give some thought to whether the government of Canada might be prepared to go a bit beyond the normal approach accepted in this country, is that we should recognize that the jurisdiction of the Crown does not cover the entire situation. We have all taken an oath of allegiance to Her Majesty, but we know that the prerogatives of the Crown exercised in the right of Canada do not completely encompass this whole question of rights due to the Indian people of this country.

This establishes the relationship. I hope I can make it clear that I am not talking about any form of narrow racism, nor was I when I put that question in those terms. What I was trying to get at was the idea that the policy statement of the minister was based on a concept of white colonial supremacy, which is what brought Canada into being. What I was trying to get across was that in other parts of the world, the initial colonial powers have been divesting themselves of a colonial policy. Because the British North America Act and the Statute of Westminster of 1931 made Canada a sovereign power in the ordinary context of the term, we have this heritage in our midst. I believe there was a statement made by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom the other day which bears this out. We have a responsibility in Canada to do what Britain did in India.

I can remember as a young Canadian being quite smug and complacent, and one of those who was willing to go to great lengths to do something about Britain freeing these other people called Indians. Down through the years we have been very smug and virtuous about the failings of colonialism and how Britain should free the peoples in Africa and in her other colonies. It has been very easy to get that kind of reaction. We have listened to a lot of statements in this house in the last year or so about the problems of Nigeria. Unless we are prepared to approach this matter of dealing with the Indian people with the same spirit we expect Britain, France, Ger-

many or any of the other Imperial powers to approach that question of freeing the peoples of Africa and Asia, we do not really understand the problem. If we are going to understand our Indian people we must first try to understand ourselves, understand what we are and recognize how we came to be.

• (4:30 p.m.)

Some of my ancestors came to this continent in the 1600's. I have colonial blood in my veins, like most hon. members in the chamber, at least those who are not in what is sometimes referred to in other discussions as the third group. If I have learned anything in the last few years from sitting down and talking to Indian people, it is that with humility I should look at myself in the mirror and try to understand what I am before I can hope to understand what they are. I submit this is the whole point behind the motion of the hon. member for Skeena. The hon. member moved his motion in the hope that the minister having moved to the point in time where he now is, may be willing to recognize this concept in his approach to the question of aboriginal rights and rights to land, particularly in a province like British Columbia where we negotiated no treaties with the Indian people and therefore there are no legal documents. It is our hope that the minister will approach the problem in this way. For this reason we thought it desirable to have this debate this afternoon.

I submit, as I submitted when we had a discussion on Indian matters a week or so before the minister made his statement, that we are at a turning point. The Indian people have re-awakened, as peoples are re-awakening in many parts of the world and in certain provinces of this country. We now have the opportunity to sow the seeds of peace and brotherhood, or we can perpetuate the growth of the seeds of bitterness, which the minister must have experienced, as a result of his recent policy statement.

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, over the hundred years since confederation the government of Canada has made many fundamental mistakes in the treatment of the group of people in this country whom we sometimes call, euphemistically, our first Canadians. However, I do not think there has been any greater mistake than the premature policy statement the minister made a short time ago. I was startled as I read it. I have been bombarded by telegrams, briefs and personal letters from Indians in every