

*Supply—Indian Affairs*

Mr. MEIGHEN: I agree with the minister in that. I agree with him that the right line of education for the Indian youth—after the three R's are mastered: reading, writing, and arithmetic and no excessive amount of any of them—is to teach him to work, teach him to farm, particularly to teach him to earn a living. I am inclined to agree with the leader of the Progressive party on this subject. I do not think there is any use trying to make a white man of the Indian whether in education or, possibly, in religion; it cannot be done. The thing to do with the Indian is to remember that he is only a few generations from the bush. Keep him in the open as much as possible, children as well as men—that for the purposes of their health—and utilize the funds of the government to teach them to earn their living. I am inclined to think we spend too much money on certain forms of education, and I have doubts whether the additional half million that is asked for in this vote is necessary providing we confine the application of public moneys to the essential educative needs of the Indian. I would be sorry to see any niggardliness in the way of policy as to education, providing it is such education as fits the Indian to help himself. There is no easier way of wasting money than on unnecessary school equipment, teachers, and so forth, and unnecessary curriculum for Indian children. As the hon. member for Brandon (Mr. Forke) said there has been a tremendous amount wasted. I do not know what the proportion is but a good large proportion are right under the blanket in a month from the time they get out of the school, and unless some feature of the File Hills work follows the school, the money of the government has gone within a short time after graduation. I think the efforts of the department should be more and more directed to bringing the individual Indian into a responsible working job as he gets out of the Indian school. If such is the policy it is going to bring far better results than to continue him in the school and then abandon him when he gets through. So, while I do not object to the extra grant—providing the officers of the department and the minister have thoroughly thought the subject out—I really, if I had to do it myself, would go over the estimates again and see if the half million could not be struck off, and the moneys already voted—I mean the moneys that have been voted in previous years—applied, perhaps, to curtailment of the academic curriculum to some extent, the balance being used for more practical purposes and for the continuation of the File Hills work.

[Mr. C. A. Stewart.]

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I would just like to say in reply to my right hon. friend that is exactly what I have been trying to tell the committee this afternoon—

Mr. MEIGHEN: Yes, I heard some of it.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): —and I agree most heartily with it. I think the mistake that has been made is, that we have been trying to educate the Indian and then abandoning him the moment he steps outside of the schoolroom door. I do not see how you could expect any different result. I cannot very well see how it could be different. You have only given him an education; you have not equipped him at all to take his place in a different walk of life and you have spoiled him for the avocation carried on by his people. Now, what else could be the result but that in many cases he would be a failure such as has been depicted by the leader of the Progressive party. With these object lessons in front of us we should endeavour to shape our policy accordingly. I am not anxious to give the Indian a very extended education, but I do earnestly desire to give him a sufficient education in order that he may be able to take his place with the white man in the ordinary avocations of life.

Mr. MEIGHEN: But there is an enormous increase.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): My right hon. friend must bear in mind the fact that the late government spent no money on educational institutions during the whole period of the war.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Oh, yes. we spent some.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I would like to take my right hon. friend to some institutions in which the Indian youth is being educated; I would like to show him some of the institutions in which the work is being carried on. Surely, in all fairness, if we are to do this work, if we are to even make an attempt to do it, we ought to have reasonable places in which to house these children and that has not been the case. I saw some examples of that. I saw some splendid institutions. I saw an institution at Qu'Appelle of which the Canadian government, or any other government, can well be proud; a splendid building, well conducted, and the pupils that I saw there demonstrated the advantages of an institution of that kind. It is not my policy to build institutions of that character. At the same time I think that much better work could be done in an institution of that