

*Indian Act*

If Hon. Members look carefully at the Order Paper, they will notice Motion No. 5, which is in my name, has been ruled out of order by the Speaker. There can be no procedural argument against that at all because such a motion does require Royal Recommendation. I hope, some day when we reform Parliament, that we will do something to spruce up the way we handle the report stage of Bills coming out of committee. Our committee Chairman quite rightly pointed out that to extend the range or categories of people eligible for the recognition of status obviously involves the expenditure of public money because such persons are eligible for certain benefits, such as post-secondary education and health care premiums. So it is not good sense at all to have the same motion come back in the House after it has been ruled on in the committee. However, that has been the practice of the House of Commons for as long as I have been here and until we hear from the reform committee a better way of dealing with the report stage, that is the situation.

● (1150)

It does give me the opportunity at least to compare my Motion No. 5 with the Minister's Motion No. 5A. The thrust is basically the same except that I went somewhat further than the Minister did. There were certain categories, for example, Métis people who had received script, who had been included in my motion and they are not in the Minister's motion. The acceptance of 5A and 18A gives us no difficulty at all.

Having said that, allow me, Mr. Speaker, to provide a little background and then to conclude with the comment about the distinction between status and membership in an Indian First Nation.

First of all, the background: it may surprise some Hon. Members in this House, I am sure it will surprise a lot of Canadian people who are not given to examine carefully all aspects of the history of this country, that within the Indian Act there is a good deal of Canadian history, an attitudinal approach to the aboriginal people of Canada.

Whether the Fathers of Confederation were not aware, or whether they were too much aware; but by assuming control over Indian people and subsequently Parliament passing the Indian Act, there was a policy in place that could be very accurately described, although it is crude and rough, as a policy of termination. That will shock a lot of Canadians because the very term smacks a little bit of the "final solution" coming out of the Third Reich. Of course there was nothing physical about the policy of termination, but there was everything cultural about it. It was in fact a policy of cultural genocide, to gradually do away with a distinct aboriginal or Indian culture in this country and to do so by a series of enticements which would allow individual Indian persons to remove themselves from certain prohibitions that were imposed upon them if they did not find the enticements to be attractive.

Among those enticements were the rights to vote, before it was extended to Indian people by an Act of this Parliament; the right to consume alcoholic beverages in public places; the

right to go to universities and enlist in the Armed Forces; all of those categories that the Minister mentioned, if an Indian chose any one of those he was, so to speak, enfranchised. To say that in another way, he was terminated. He was no longer considered in the eyes of the Government of Canada to be an Indian.

So we have that very strange term in this country, which I am sure would baffle anyone. The term is non-status Indian. Let us say that you went to some other part of the world, Australia, for example, where there is also a significant aboriginal population and tried to explain to a legislator in any one of the Australian states or in the federal Parliament, which they call the Commonwealth, that we, by an Act of Parliament, have categorized Indian people; those who are of mixed blood, the Métis; those who have made certain decisions vis-à-vis the Indian Act as non-status; and those who have not made that decision as status, and if you could explain that in a logical, rational way to someone who does not live in Canada or has not been a part of it, then you are a much better teacher than I am, because the end result of that is just a puzzlement.

We can remove the puzzlement here because we know what the intention was. The intention was that, over a period of time—I do not think anyone knew how long it would take—the Indian people would disappear. They would be integrated. They would be assimilated. They would become part of the mainstream, and we would encourage this to happen by certain provisions of the Indian Act.

That is what we mean, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about terminating a people or enacting legislation which results in cultural genocide. Over a period of time it was hoped I think by the Fathers of Confederation, if they thought about it at all, but it must have been thought about by the framers of the first version of the Indian Act, that we will get rid of these people.

The Chairman of the committee has quite rightly noted that the Indian people of Canada have had tremendous tenacity, that now, deep into the 20th century, they still survive. They still have their cultural identity which is distinct and which is deeply held on to by these people despite all of the winds of adversity that have blown against them for so many decades, for a period of time that exceeds a century. They have held on to certain fundamental rights that they emphasize they have never, never relinquished: the right to control and manage and direct their own affairs; the right to be self-governing; they never relinquished that. They have not relinquished their own cultural integrity to any other authority. They retained all of that. What they did was to make generous room in this country for those who came from other parts of the world. In some cases they entered into treaties with the colonizers. Unfortunately, although those treaties are sacrosanct, highly respected and highly regarded, nevertheless I think, even though they have almost a sacred quality for Indian people, we all recognize that there was unequal negotiation for those treaties, that the colonizers had an advantage and they took advantage of these people.

All of that has continued up until the present time, and now at long last we have revealed this policy for all that it is. I