

*Indian Act*

In January of this year a brief submitted to the Gordon royal commission by the Yellowknife District Miners' Union touched on this matter of the Indian and the liquor problem. Although no definite recommendation was made in this connection, it is interesting to note that this portion of their brief draws attention to the significant profits made by bootleggers under the present system. Last year the International Catholic League against Alcoholism distributed a questionnaire among Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries in northern Canada. The questionnaire asked for views and suggestions on laws governing the sale of alcoholic beverages to Indians. Answers were received from at least ten points in the Yukon, and it is interesting to note that the majority of those replying felt that Indians should have the same rights as non-Indians in this regard. Taking the survey as a whole, however, the majority opinion was adverse to any change in this connection.

I feel that Indians, in principle, should not be restricted in this matter but that in practice the problem should be handled by means of the local option privilege. It is felt by many that the approach toward any solution should be a cautious one, and conducted on an experimental basis.

If the Indians of Canada are to take their proper place in the Canadian community, and to play their rightful part in the upbuilding of this nation, they should be encouraged to accept as much responsibility as they are able to carry. The closer we and they can come to realizing this ideal, the happier they will be, and the stronger Canada will become.

At six o'clock the committee took recess.

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**AFTER RECESS**

The committee resumed at eight o'clock.

**Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo):** I should like to say a few words on this resolution we now have before us on Indian affairs. I have always had a great interest in the Indians in my own province of British Columbia, particularly on the coast, and I have had some fairly intimate friendships with many of them.

The hon. member for Yukon this afternoon mentioned one of my most distinguished constituents, who was here a few days ago, the Reverend Dr. Peter Kelly. I think that the existence of a person like Dr. Kelly illustrates the complexity of this problem of the Indian population of Canada. Dr. Kelly is, of course, a doctor of divinity and a very eminent minister in the United Church

ministry, and he is also a member of a chief's family of the Haida Indians. I have a peculiar interest in him because his son at one time taught my children in the public schools on Vancouver island, and I realize that in Dr. Kelly, and in his whole family for that matter, we have not only outstanding representatives of the Indian population but outstanding citizens of Canada. It is not easy perhaps to devise a formula that will apply equally to such people as Dr. Kelly and his family and the less advanced members of the native population of Canada.

Every year before I come to Ottawa I always have great satisfaction in being summoned to attend a meeting of the council of the Indians in part of my constituency who call me down to tell me their troubles and what they want me to try to do for them. I think that perhaps is a demonstration that they have come of age in their own minds, even if we do not admit it here in this House of Commons, and that they consider a member of this house as their representative as well as the representative of those who have the privilege of voting for him. I sometimes think that we should have one or two members of that Indian tribe attend here in this chamber and then perhaps we would hear oratory that has not been heard here for a generation, because these people on the coast of British Columbia are for some reason or another natural born orators. What many of the Indians in my constituency can do with the English language should be the envy of some of us to whom it is the native tongue.

We have an enormous responsibility with regard to the Indians because, owing principally, I think, to ignorance, and partly also to greed and selfishness, we completely shattered their very complex social structure when the white people came to this country. I know this is particularly true among the bands and nations of the coast Indians. The regulations that were put into effect in the early days prohibiting many of their traditional customs simply shattered the fabric of their whole society. When I hear people speaking in a contemptuous manner of the behaviour of Indians, I often wonder how we would behave if some conquering race came in and forbade us to carry on with the traditional social institutions to which we had been accustomed for generations, as these people had been.

In recent years on the coast of British Columbia the Indians have been beginning to assume their rightful place in our society and, with the aid of better economic conditions and better educational opportunities, are now beginning to match the white man