

*Indian Affairs*

When members of Parliament have a problem in their constituencies, the government knows about it very quickly. However, that is not the case with the Department of Indian Affairs. Those who have native people in their constituencies constantly receive people at their offices there, and in Ottawa.

We now have the constitutional express, and many native people here in Ottawa talking about the problems and the inability of solving those problems under the umbrella we have set up and the methods we have continued to follow for many years. We have lost confidence because we have not come up with new ideas. I said we, but I should say the minister and this government, because when the Progressive Conservatives were the government we were moving rapidly toward self-reliance. However, that was a very short period and we did not have an opportunity to put those ideas forward.

According to the motion as presented, culture and language are areas in which we have fallen back. Unlike other ethnic minorities in this country, native people have nowhere else in the world to go to renew their language and culture. They only have Canada. For thousands of years they have been here and, therefore, their traditions, culture and language must be looked after in a special way.

This is why the native people are calling for entrenchment of certain rights in the constitution. They are concerned that if those rights are not entrenched in the constitution before we patriate it, they will never be in there. This is the reason they have come to Ottawa twice in the last year to discuss this problem. Even though they have been promised they would be involved in every aspect which affects them directly, they have not been involved. There have been a few cordial meetings where they have been listened to, but nothing has happened.

The minister is saying, "Trust me. I will look after you once the constitution is patriated". We will see if there are any amendments accepted by the government resulting from the constitution committee which is now in place. We will see whether the proclamation will be in the schedule and whether these rights, language, culture and traditions will be maintained, because, as I said, there is nowhere else in the world they can go to renew them.

We spend \$250 million a year on education for 300,000 people. Despite the millions that are spent each year, there are less native people graduating from high schools. As I mentioned before, there were only two in Edmonton, and 20 per cent in the rest of Canada. When looking for a job and attempting to assist their band, it is very difficult because more and more native people do not have adequate education. They do not carry on their education in universities and colleges. In most instances the amount of money available for them to live in the cities where they must go to attend college is inadequate.

There are hardly any teachers graduating who will teach the native people. The greatest success has been in those colleges set up by the native people. Maskwachee College in Hobbema, Alberta, is now graduating teachers with the help of the University of Calgary. They are finally graduating teachers to

help native children attain some scholastic abilities, and not in the traditional ways that have been used in the past.

We all know of the alcohol problem and the number of native people in our jails across the nation. As far as alcohol is concerned, many people have had a drinking problem for years. The problem of attempting to dry these people out is the same as with any other person. It does not work in the established institutions. Where it is working is in the detoxification centres set up by the native people. Put yourself in their position.

• (1610)

I will use an example in my constituency. After being an alcoholic for ten years and finally receiving some help at a detoxification centre on a reserve, a person comes out of that institution. He has a grade seven education. Having been out of service for about ten years, who will hire that person? He has very little education and no real abilities, as well as a past record. We have to put in place the ability for that person to further his education and get the kinds of training and trades which are essential. As it is now, when he leaves the institution there is nothing to do but go back to drinking. He does not have the ability to take pride in himself and the people around him.

This is the case of over half the people in jails in Alberta. It is not quite that high in other parts of Canada. There is no counselling for these native people. If there is, it is only in limited areas. When they leave the institution, what is there for them?

**Mr. Yurko:** Hopelessness.

**Mr. Schellenberger:** In many cases, as my colleague says, it is hopelessness. We have to develop those programs. For years I have been watching to see whether those programs would be developed. I do not see them being developed. In some cases native people, in desperation, if they have their own funds, have developed this because they realize the problems. However, in most cases they do not have their own funds. They are dependent on the department to dole out funds.

As I conclude, I want to put on record a quote from the B.C. Indian Chiefs which I believe sums up the problem:

As Indian nations, we have battled for many years on many fronts to retain our special status, dignity and pride. As Indian people we fought and will continue to fight for our right to exist as sovereign nations gathering strength from each battle.

When we lose we become more determined and find other ways to continue the battle. We have fought governments, corporations, courts, small people, big people, and those who ever stood to threaten our lands and our rights. We've withstood racism, poverty, disease, ignorance, assimilation, social chaotic disorder and political suppression by paternalistic governments. We have survived. But now, our Indian nations across Canada are in "a state of emergency". Our future as Indian people has been put on the line.

That is why we have a conference here in Ottawa this week. Many feel it is a state of emergency. There has to be hope in order for people to have dignity and work their problems out themselves, not under some paternalistic hand. It has to come from within themselves. If they are not granted the tools to do