

*Indian Act*

under different conditions. I want to add a word of commendation to the minister on the improvement of those conditions over the last number of years.

I hold several ideas, which I think are held by the Indians themselves. The first is that the Indians want to see education divorced from the churches. Let me make myself perfectly clear. I admit immediately that the churches have done marvellous work, particularly in the north, and that without that pioneer work the northern Indians would be largely pagan and unlettered. But just as the time arrived in our own system of education when the greater part of the functions had to be taken over from the churches by the state, so I think the time has now arrived when we should introduce into our system of Indian education the same type of public schools we ourselves have. In pioneer days not only education but medicine and many other things were part of the work of the missionaries. The Indian, I think, feels the time has come for the government to take over a good many of those functions which the missionary was asked to perform but which I do not think are in the sphere of the church.

Here I want to pay tribute to the work of the residential schools; but in many parts of the country the Indians are asking for public schools, and that those schools be in their own settlement. I think there is a valid argument for that point of view. Many Indian children living at home are being given no schooling at all. The education of Indian children in the Northwest Territories is directly the business of this parliament, so this is one debate on education when this matter of provincial autonomy, which shows itself in every discussion of the kind in this house, will not be dragged in. In those territories this government is responsible; both the government public schools and the denominational day schools are maintained directly from the exchequer of this country.

In the early days any education obtained by the Indians, and indeed by the white people, was acquired at the mission. The teaching was done voluntarily, as an act of charity. Later small grants were given by the government and books and certain simple equipment were provided. In recent years I believe the government has been paying practically all the costs of these mission day schools, except the cost of the buildings themselves and their maintenance. Now there is a demand for public schools. If what the hon. member for Lethbridge (Mr. Blackmore) says is correct—and I am not saying whether or not it is—and the primary object of the

church sponsors is not always simply education in the ordinary sense, then the government is subsidizing denominationalism at least to some extent.

The problem is how education may be best brought to the Indian child. I believe it should be brought to him and not that he should be brought to it. How are we best to introduce the world to these children in the development of their bodies, their minds and their intellects through the media of science, literature, history and such handwork as we think may be best adapted for them? The development of skills and handwork, I believe, should be an important part of the education of these people, who are accustomed to use their hands and who are used to living in the open spaces. Such an education would aid Indian children in their enjoyment of life, and their ability to be independent in earning a living.

I have said that, when introduced to our civilization, the Indian young people seemed to pick out the worst things. Someone has talked about the young men hanging around the poolrooms and such places. It would seem to me that our task would be to give them a taste for the first-rate things. There is no way that can be acquired unless they are somehow or other brought into contact with those things. At this point I should like to offer some general principles, ideas or suggestions.

I believe that statistics show, although I have not the statistics with me, an increase in the number of day schools. I am in favour of this. One great advantage of the day school to my mind is that the child is in touch with his parents and his home, at the same time as he is with education. I think my argument is sound when I say that the child, being educated at a day school and going home nightly, has as much effect upon the parents and the home as the educational institution has upon the child himself. In that regard I believe the day school is far superior to the residential school. The danger of the residential school is that the child is taken seventy-five or a hundred miles, whatever the distance may be, away from his home and, for the time being, seems to enter a foreign country in which things are altogether different. He does not see the application of those ways to his own way of life or to the manner in which his parents earn their livelihood. He is in that foreign land until he leaves it to return to the land of his birth. Then, he simply throws up the whole thing and says there is no use in trying to adapt new ways to the old mode of life. He again becomes immersed in the habits in which he was brought up from early childhood.