

Indian Act

I have been advised by another delegation that all tribes in Alberta are opposing this section. I do not know that for sure, but I am disturbed by the fact that the Indians in Alberta generally are not members of the National Brotherhood. I just do not like the idea of their being left out. A very prominent chief of the Stony tribe came here to the constitutional conference. He could not get in because the National Council of Indians would not let him in. He went home very disappointed. This is a very important tribe in Alberta which could not even have an observer because of the National Brotherhood. These things disturb our people. They are disturbed over the fact that the legislation will force people on to the reserve who would otherwise not be able to do so.

● (1610)

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I cannot sit here and listen to this wonderful list of bands and groups who have spoken out with respect to the right to band control, and the issue of discrimination against women which is elucidated, enunciated and spoken to but not meant sincerely. Discrimination against women has been done against their will. They were enfranchised despite the band practice. As the Hon. Member across the way mentioned, the bands controlled their process, procedure and membership long before we got here, but they did not enfranchise their women; we did.

What I am saying is that before the Minister moves in this regard, I think he should reinstate the women and the people who lost their status and then start from a degree of equivalency, equity and good common sense and let them participate. I think discrimination, the way he is putting it, is a false issue. Discrimination against women is blatant and they very definitely spoke out. The list that was read earlier was not a complete list.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few words on this particular group of motions. I know that this Bill is trying to make the best out of a bad deal. This was part of the Indian Act for a good many years and, while it was inadequate, people learned to live with it. Therefore, it is important that as many wrongs as possible be corrected through the enactment of these amendments without doing harm to the future of the bands which are presently worrying about what is going to happen to them over the next couple of generations. One of the weakness of this Bill is that it does not put in place the finances which might be necessary because of the changes which are going to be made.

I guess we have covered Motion No. 14A fairly well. Our concern was that it is permissive. If you took Motion No. 14A and Motion No. 17 together, I suppose you would fulfil those requirements we feel are important because if the Bill is passed in its present form, there are a lot of people who might be returned to status. However, with Motion No. 14A, they may not get an opportunity to say anything about what the membership should be or will be. There are people who were enfranchised against their will in many cases, or for reasons which are now considered by this House and most of the people of Canada as being unacceptable. The motion does not

make it necessary for those who might be returned to status to be listed and be part of the democratic structure of the band. I think it is also necessary to point out that this clause does not return to status anyone who did not have status before. Consequently it is not a particularly bad approach, as I indicated, since it does correct some of the wrongs in the original Indian Act.

Motion No. 16 makes an effort to reduce the power of the Minister and allow for a little more open discussion. I agree with that and support it to some extent at least. As to Motion No. 21, there are groups of Indians and individuals who have never been given status. I have quite a large number of these people in my constituency. They were not given status because they were not on any of the reserves at the time the treaty was signed. Consequently, they find themselves roaming around from reserve to reserve, never getting status because there are no records of their status. It is very important to be able to accept as evidence statements which may not be documented. Therefore, we support that particular approach. As I said, it is making the best out of a bad deal, but in the process we have to be sure that all positions are aired, and that we ensure the possibility of economic and social development among the bands in the future. If this is the aim of this legislation and we are willing to put in place the necessary funds, then we should support it and get the Bill through the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion No. 32A (Mr. Crombie) agreed to.

● (1620)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The next question is on Motion No. 15 in the name of the Hon. Member for Athabasca (Mr. Shields). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour will please say yea.

Some Hon. Members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five Members having risen: