

Motions for Papers

adopted by the governments represented at this conference on Indian affairs. This is what the motion before us seeks to acquire—that there may be laid before this house—

—a copy of all submissions, presentations, briefs and other documents, and a copy of any speeches delivered at, or to the recent dominion-provincial conference on Indian affairs by each provincial government or any person representing a provincial government.

The motion which follows deals with presentations by the government of Canada but the argument is precisely the same. I do not wish to add more at this stage except to conclude, in summary, by saying: here we have once in the lifetime of Canada as a nation a meeting being held at the top level between representatives of the federal and provincial governments in the course of a full-scale dominion-provincial conference. For once there was a desire on the part of all levels of government to sit down and talk about the fundamental rights and liberties of the senior group of people in this nation, the native Indian people. We believe we should now try to correct what was an error by this government in the first place that is, the decision to hold these meetings in private, by affording to the native people an opportunity of finding out what went on behind those closed doors. We can best do this by having the various documents made public so that the Indian people may know what we are doing with regard to their rights and their welfare.

Mr. Hubert Badanai (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I fully appreciate the concern felt by the hon. member about government policy affecting the Indian population. I wish to point out, however, that the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) has no monopoly in concern for the welfare of the Indian people. There is not one member in this house who would not favour the best possible treatment for our Indians, and it was precisely with this in mind that a federal-provincial conference on Indian affairs was called to discuss ways and means by which the interests of the Indian people could best be served.

I cannot accept the suggestion made by the hon. member that this conference between the federal government and the provinces was so different from any other federal-provincial conference. In his opening remarks, the former minister of citizenship and immigration made the following statement from which I should like to quote in part:

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This conference has its origin in a recommendation made by the committee appointed to study the administration of Indian and Eskimo affairs during the 1963 federal-provincial conference. The committee report charted desirable long range objectives and policies applicable to the Indian people, and basic principles that should be adhered to in moving towards such objectives. Much of our discussion during the next two days will take place within the framework of these objectives and principles and it may be helpful if I review them briefly.

The 1963 conference placed stress on the necessity of correlating federal and provincial policies and responsibilities for health, welfare, education, community development and other services if Indians were to be associated more closely with other Canadians. It defined as important long term objectives equality of opportunities for Indians in all aspects of Canadian life; provision of provincial services and programs on the basis that needs in Indian communities should be met according to standards applicable in other communities.

Increasing participation of Indians in the management of their own affairs; the development of Indian leadership to discharge equitable financial arrangements.

It recognized also that in working toward these objectives Indians should be consulted throughout, existing essential services to Indians must be maintained during the development of new arrangements, and that as the long term objectives are attained special supports and protections historically provided to Indians should be progressively adjusted. Finally, it recognized that the time had come to find the basis on which the widest possible range of federal, provincial and municipal services can be extended to Indians.

This was of course reflected in the agenda of the conference. Perhaps I may quote from the agenda.

Nation-wide agreements as opposed to province-by-province agreements; uniformity of agreements may neither be possible nor practical, but the constructive possibilities should be explored.

The role of co-ordinating committees in each province, comprised of provincial and federal officials, in providing for the extension of provincial and municipal services to Indians and in maintaining liaison.

Financing, including consideration of the scope and extent of provincial responsibilities.

The educational rights and privileges of Indians as residents of provinces.

Federal-provincial agreements in lieu of agreements to existing legislation, federal or provincial; and capital costs.

The integration of federal schools into provincial systems.

Provincial supervision of federal schools.

Special training for teachers.

Discussion on federal welfare and general assistance proposals.

Future of federal-provincial conferences on Indian affairs—need; structure; objectives, etc.

Legislation: need for new legislation or amendments to existing legislation, federal or provincial, the Indian claims commission; the Indian Act; various provincial acts and so on.

All ten provinces were represented and for the record I wish to name the delegates who were present on that occasion. Nova