

Suggested National Indian Day

speak for long on this resolution. This will give other members a greater opportunity to take part in the discussion. I would express the hope that other speakers will not take up too much time, and thereby talk out the resolution.

This resolution may seem strange to some who have never investigated or appreciated the role which the Canadian Indian has played in our nation. There are probably very few of us who realize that there are more than 200,000 Canadians of Indian descent in our nation, in other words, one in every hundred, and that their numbers are increasing at a rate greater than the national average. In the years before and since nationhood the Indian has, I feel, been misused and abused by those of other origins who have had the responsibility of determining policies for our successive governments. Some may say: "That is just a cliché; every once in a while someone gets up and says that." I am not in the habit of talking in this manner but I sincerely hold the views I am expressing on this subject.

At this stage in Canada's development, when every nationality in our population appears to desire a unique position for its contribution, there is no group of individuals which stands higher in my estimation than the Canadian Indians. It is for this reason that I propose we should have a national Indian day in our centennial year.

It has been my privilege since my election to the House of Commons in 1957, and even before, to have been associated with those who make up the Indian community in my constituency and to realize their determination to make Canada a better place in which to live, to realize their dedication and loyalty to our nation. This is exemplified by the fact that during the first world war every eligible man of the Micmacs of Cape Breton Island volunteered to fight for his country in time of peril. Further, in the second world war many of the Indian people from my constituency and throughout Canada served with distinction in our armed forces overseas.

I have been concerned to learn of the discrimination and neglect that this race has been forced to suffer during our years of nationhood. It is not uncommon to hear people say that the Indians are lazy and slovenly, that they do not wish to help themselves. I have heard this said by white people, but I do not agree. I condemn this line of thinking and I condemn those who say such things. In any race one will find people who are lazy,

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people who are slovenly and who do not wish to help themselves. I am glad to see that the thinking of Canadians is slowly changing, that we are getting away from the attempt to transform these people into "white men", as it were, and beginning to develop a pride in them and a recognition of their rights.

If we hope to develop the Indians into a well-adjusted community with pride in their cultural heritage we must continue to act along the lines recently announced by the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Laing) when he produced a program estimated to cost the federal government in excess of \$100 million over the next five years. Undoubtedly some people will be shocked at the size of the amount which the minister has indicated is necessary for the provision of better housing, water, sanitation facilities, electrification and improved roads in the Indian communities throughout this country. But this shock could lead to a re-examination of the degree of neglect the Indians have had to suffer during the last 100 years because governments were unwilling to recognize the just claims made on them and provide the consideration which the Indians demanded but did not receive. At this point let me commend the minister and the government on this forward step. I hope there will be many more to follow.

I should also like to commend the extension department of St. Francis Xavier University, the laymen and the clergy who have been doing tremendous work since 1957 in my own area of Cape Breton in the field of community development and in other matters in co-operation with government.

A national Indian day will not in my opinion eliminate in any way the inequities which exist in our nation so far as Indians are concerned. But it would, I believe, add luster and honour to the race and focus public attention on the tremendous contribution which Indians have made toward the development of our country. I do not suggest that this should be another "national apple day" or celebration of that kind. I suggest this be made truly a national Indian day, a day upon which all the people in Canada would recognize our Indian brothers in a proper manner.

I mentioned a few moments ago the contribution which has been made by the Indian people. There are some who might wonder what this contribution has been. It is not generally well known that any contribution of significance has been made. Indeed, if one