

*Indian Act*

Improvement Loans Act, under the Industrial Development Bank Act, under the Veterans' Land Act and so on.

Personally, I think there is a very real danger that with all these government loaning agencies in operation there could be a duplication of effort, and wasted effort. I see no reason whatever why loans made to Indians could not be made under the same facilities we have for making loans to other people in Canada.

During the past year the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has made many speeches throughout the country, and has spoken about government policy in connection with Indians. If I understood him correctly, the main purpose of government policy is to integrate the Indian into our Canadian way of life.

I am going to suggest tonight that this government policy is a step in the opposite direction, because it continues to keep the Indian in a class apart. It sets up or extends at the expense of the taxpayer, a large administrative machine for the specific purpose of providing credit for Indians which duplicates facilities already in existence for other Canadians. I suggest that this problem could be met much more adequately if instead of bringing forward this legislation, the government took steps to bring the Indian under the provisions of other existing federal acts.

To give one example; why should an Indian wanting to build a home not be able to do so, by taking advantage of the provisions of the National Housing Act. Or if an Indian wishes to purchase a farm, why should he not be able to purchase it under the provisions of the Canadian Farm Loan Act. If an Indian wants to purchase a boat for fishing, why should he not make a loan under the Canadian Fisherman's Loan Act? And so on. Even more important, I think this government should take steps to allow and encourage Indians to take advantage of the benefits offered by our banks, mortgage companies and so on. It may be that the government would have to guarantee the loans, but they have done that in many other cases in the past, and I do not see why they should not do it for Indians.

I repeat that I am in sympathy with the objectives of this legislation, but I feel that the machinery proposed is completely wrong. I submit that the sooner encouragement is given to our Indians to use existing credit facilities when they require loans, the sooner they will join with other Canadians in making a maximum contribution to this nation. I think it is possible for the government

[Mr. Thatcher.]

to get into the lending business too extensively and therefore I am opposed to this legislation.

**Mr. Dinsdale:** Mr. Chairman, it seems to be that in dealing with the Indian problem it might be considered to be more of a white problem than an Indian problem. That is what I would conclude from some of the comments we have just heard. It is so seldom that we have a chance in this house to deal with matters relating to Indian affairs that there is apt to be a sad misunderstanding of the nature of the problem.

I would assume that the resolution before us will have much wider implications than the extending of credit facilities to the first citizens of Canada. In introducing the resolution this afternoon the minister dealt almost exclusively with that particular part, but he hinted, very vaguely perhaps, that there were to be substantial amendments to the Indian Act. Later on the hon. member for Calgary North dealt with some of the amendments which are proposed, basing his information on the trial run which had been given to the legislation before the conference of representative Indians which was held recently in Ottawa.

I hope that tonight we are to be allowed to speak on the broader aspects of the resolution, namely the contemplated changes or amendments to the Indian Act, or as the resolution puts it, changes in connection with the administration of the act. It was in 1951 that substantial amendments were made to the Indian Act. At that time the department took on a new look. There was a new attitude adopted toward the problem and since that time the minister and officials of the department have been endeavouring to interpret the new approach to the problem in public statements across the country.

They recognize that the essence of the difficulty is the reserve system. Speaker after speaker from the minister down has indicated that if we are going to integrate the Indian population, if we are going to eventually assimilate these first Canadians into the general life of Canada, we must break down the system of segregation which has been growing up since the arrival of the white man in this country. It is generally suggested that the best way to carry out this desegregation program, if I may use that term, the best way to break down the reserve system is by a stepping up of the educational program.

I trust that in the amendments which will be brought in as a result of this resolution, especially those having to do with changes in administration, will permit the minister to give some attention to the difficulties which have arisen in administering the new look and