

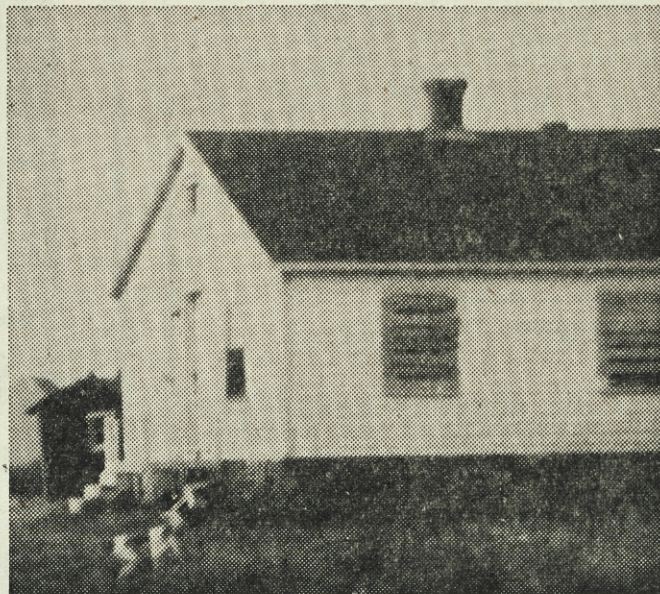
The Indian On P. E. I.

Our objective in presenting this article is twofold. In the present issue of R & W we intend to describe some of the social and economic conditions facing the Indian on P.E.I. and the resulting problems. Secondly, and in the next issue, we intend to discuss the root causes of these conditions, the part that Government has played in them, and some proposals that might lead to a solution of the problem.

Lennox Island is home to most of P.E.I.'s Indians. It's about two and a half miles long and consists of 1320 acres of some of the bleakest landscape you'll find in P.E.I. That is not to say that the Indians aren't attached to it. They are. They have been living there for so long . . . and as one Indian said: "it is part of the little land we have left in Canada".

Lennox Island is home to most of P.E.I.'s Indians since 1865. The Indian agent at that time had contacted the Aborigines Protection Society in London, England. This resulted in the purchase of Lennox Island by the Society, which then turned it over to be used as a reserve. Possibly this was done to forestall the application of the Newfoundland method of solving the Indian problem. In Newfoundland they simply shot them all. No Indians — no problems. Anyway since that time it appears that the policy of various Governments has been to concentrate the Indians on Lennox Island. As recently as 1948 the Federal Government persuaded a number of Indian families to move from the smaller Rocky Point and Scotchfort reserves to Lennox Island. That is where you'll find the majority today.

On Lennox Island today there are approximately forty families. The problems they face are many and varied.



HOUSING

This is a great problem and drawback to the Indian people on Lennox Island and on the other two reserves. On Lennox Island there are forty homes. The majority of them are whitewashed which might deceive the observer into thinking they are in a good state. Thirty-two of the forty have no running water or toilet facilities. There are no coverings on the floors. Vast home improvement is required but one factor prevents this — lack of funds. Last year the Department of Indian Affairs gave \$800 to the Band for home improvement. This year the Band was to receive \$8,000. This has been reduced to seven thousand which would put no more than two homes in a state fit for human occupancy. The majority therefore, must continue to live without the things which are considered bare necessities.

EDUCATION

Education is always considered to be answer

to many problems, and this is as true with the Indians as with the White Man. Until this year grades 1 to 6 were taught in the school on the Island. The teachers have been poor, and mostly unqualified, and incapable of communicating with the children. This year grades 7 and 8 are also being taught. The Sisters of St. Martha have returned to the Island and seem capable of teaching and breaking down the communication barrier. They feel that the children are very capable and that their only problem is a lack of understanding of a few of our Anglo-Saxon expressions. The children can attend the schools on P.E.I. but this requires a boarding house near the school and any twelve year old, whether he is black, yellow, white, or red will get homesick and want to go home. This is especially true when family ties are close as they are on Lennox Island. If these people are living, and wish to continue to live in their own community, why shouldn't proper educational means be available to them?

The parents in any community exert an influence upon the children with regards to the desirability of education. It is true that on Lennox Island, at Scotchford, and at Morell there are parents who live by the old standard; who do not believe in educating their children in a classroom; and who will persevere in this belief until they die. But it is also true and evident that education is the only means to overcome this reactionary belief.

There is a young generation which is more progressive in its thinking and which desires to have its children educated. These children will be even more advanced in their thinking, but only through the right education. The academic excellence for which we are striving should also be available to the Indian.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Where alcohol is concerned the white man has a very generalized concept of the Indian. An Indian is supposed to be a man who is incapable of controlling his drinking, who, when drunk is something of a savage animal. This is true only in some cases. On the P.E.I. reservations there are people who drink to excess and who cannot control their drinking, but the situation is no more extreme than in any white community. There are as many, and perhaps more, Indians than white men who can drink and not allow it to be their master.

Only recently the civilized white man has introduced the Indians to another aspect of our culture, i.e. drugs. How can we criticize the Indians of Lennox Island or any other reservation for using drugs or sniffing glue? These are acts for which the white community is directly responsible. Thus it is our responsibility to ensure that our moral decadence is projected no further into the Indian community.

MEDICAL SERVICES

There is no doctor or nurse on Lennox Island or the other reservations. Only recently an attempt to procure the services of a doctor for the island was made. He was to come once every five weeks to give the people check-ups and detect the presence of any disease. The doctor agreed to come but later changed his mind. It remains changed. There is no nurse to advise them on day to day hygiene which might prevent disease. The poor sanitation mentioned above contributes to the bad situation. The lack of good water supply and septic tanks is a definite contribution to disease in any community.