

## PART II

# The Indian On P. E. I.

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## THE ROOT CAUSES — A PROGRAM FOR PROGRESS

In the last issue of the Red and White a bleak picture of the Indian on P.E.I. was presented. Various social and economic problems confronting them were discussed. It is hoped that the article has made the student body more aware of the gravity of the situation. It is further hoped that it has served to cultivate a greater interest in this problem on the part of all students, coupled with the determination on the part of some, at least, to do something concrete about it. In this second and final article an attempt will be made to get at the root causes of the situation facing the Indian, and some proposals aiming at solutions will be made.

When the white man first came to North America he found the Indian in a state of self-sufficiency. The Indian existed in complete harmony with nature. There was no attempt to master nature (as in the white man's case). Instead the Indian thought of himself as an integral part of his natural environment. He took what was necessary for survival. He needed no more, he took no more. He had his own culture, society, values, and beliefs. He built his home with what nature provided. He made his own clothes. If he was hungry, he hunted. All the necessities of life, he could acquire himself. He was dependent on no one. He was completely self-sufficient. As a result the Indian was a man of dignity, proud and sure of himself. He possessed self-respect and personal initiative. All these attributes followed from the fact that he was self-sufficient — because he could provide for himself and his family. The fact was that he could survive in his society, and survive because of his own talents and qualities.

All this changed with the coming of the White man. The White man completely disrupted and destroyed Indian society in America. The history of Indian-European relations presents a shameful indictment of Whites. In Mexico the Spanish completely and ruthlessly destroyed the Aztec Empire and culture. The Indians were then employed as slave-labour on Spanish plantations. They were worked until they could work no longer, and were then left to die. The situation became so bad that Indian parents were killing their children at birth rather than allowing them to live in the situation in which they found themselves. Yet the Spanish, and Cortez in particular, are thought of as conquering HEROS! The British and French were the same. The Indians came in contact with European diseases against which they had no resistance and consequently died by the thousands. The Indian was introduced to liquor which corrupted his nature. He was caught up in the rivalry between Britain and France and was set against his fellow Indian.

### CAUSES FOR SITUATION

In the continuing process of European colonization of N.A., Indians were gathered together and placed on reserves. There may have been good reasons for this action at the time, but it has caused many problems. It has had the effect of segregating the Indian and removing him from the main-stream of society. It has isolated him and developed in him a sense of inferiority. It has also led to the belief on the part of the white community that he is in some way "different". This idea of inferiority and of being different is bound to occur when a specific group of people is isolated on reserves and made the subject of special government treatment.

This special treatment in fact amounts to Governmental "paternalism". It takes many forms and the Indian on P.E.I., as well as elsewhere, is on the receiving end of it. What it amounts to is the fact that Indians can scarcely breathe without first getting governmental approval. Almost everything they have to do must first get the government's O.K. Any projects they wish to undertake must first be approved. It's like trying to dis-entangle miles and miles of red tape. It is in large measure responsible for strifling any initiative on the part of the Indians. How could anyone develop initiative when the government has the final say on everything? The system of welfare as presently conceived, produces no long

term solutions. It is responsible for robbing Indians of initiative. If the Government is providing them with a living allowance, where is the need for personal initiative? If an Indian decides to go to work his welfare allowance is cut. Where is the reward for his work? What is the sense of his working? He can receive just as much by staying at home. How does this approach to welfare stimulate a desire for financial independence? It doesn't! Again it stifles initiative. The Indian Affairs Branch of the Federal Government is responsible for Indians. Supposedly it has been since 1867. Supposedly it has made studies and knows the problems confronting the Indian people. Supposedly, after a hundred years, it could come up with a concrete program that would solve the problems of the Indians. Supposedly, it is time for action. Or is Indian Affairs simply existing to perpetuate its personnel in their jobs?

With the growth of White civilization the Indian's society was destroyed, his values and nature corrupted. He was deprived of his sense of dignity and self-respect, and the point is, the White man is responsible for this. The social and economic situation in which the Indian finds himself today, to a great extent, is the fault of the White Man. As such, the White Man has an obligation — an obligation to concern himself with the Indian problem. An obligation to take interest in the Indian situation and to help them cope with the modern world. An obligation to help restore to them their rightful dignity and self-respect.

### A NEW APPROACH REQUIRED

A new approach to the Indian problems is needed. A comprehensive program aimed at making the Indian self-sufficient is necessary. A program, which will instill in the Indian a revived sense of dignity and pride in himself and his race, is of paramount importance.

The first thing called for in this program should be a phasing out of oppressive government control over almost every facet of Indian life. At the same time the Indian should be allowed to take more responsibility. He should be encouraged to make more of his decisions. Only in this way can he progress.

The Indian should be given educational courses in the history and culture of his race. It might be pointed out that the Mayan, Aztec, and Inca Indians had developed great civilizations, built great cities, roads, pyramids, and were studying astronomy and mathematics while Europe was slumbering in the "Dark Ages". Theirs is a glorious history and wonderful heritage. It should not be left forgotten; and they need to hear of it more than anyone. This would serve to instill a sense of identity, a sense of pride in themselves as a people. It would serve to revive a sense of dignity and self-respect, of which the Whites robbed them.

The present system of financial handouts by the Government should be revamped. It has only served to foster the Government's attitude of paternalism and the Indians position of subservience. In its place a policy of financial aid designed to help the Indian stand on his own two feet should be instituted. The present financial arrangement punishes and stifles initiative. A new arrangement should serve to stimulate, aid, and reward initiative.

The White community as a whole must play a part in the final solution of this problem. A change in its attitude toward the Indian is called for, as the success or failure of any program depends to a large extent upon it. They must be willing and helpful in bringing the Indian back into the mainstream of Canadian life. They must help the Indian in every possible way to adapt to the modern world. It requires a conscious effort on the part of the whole white community. The Indian has a different set of norms and values than the white. His attitude towards the world is different. The present social and economic situation in which the Indian finds himself is a handicap that must be overcome before he can successfully adjust to modern society. Again, the white community must aid him in doing this. The Indian, ideally, should be aided in adapting himself to the modern world with all possible steps being taken to safe-guard and preserve his culture. The white community can aid in this

only if it changes its attitude towards the Indian. Only if the white community will open its heart and its mind to them can the Indian be brought out of his predicament, his isolation, and back into the mainstream of Canadian society.

### ..... DISCRIMINATION & SEGREGATION .....

We are being continually reminded of our advantageous and superior position as people of a democratic and just society. The existence of this position, of the democracy, and of the justice, is dubious with respect to the white Canadian but with respect to the Indian there is no question. The three do not exist. The Indian is, instead, the victim of our own brand of racial discrimination and segregation. It is true that there is a prevalent concept of the Indian — that of a somewhat uncivilized character who drinks to excess, is content to live in a shack, and possesses no great desire for education. It is necessary to say only that this is not true. But the fact remains that there is an element in our christian society which persists in perpetuating this attitude.

The greatest perpetuator of this injustice is the Indian Act. The fact that this act does exist is in itself discriminatory. Theoretically its aims are to protect the rights of the Indian, however in many cases its objectives seem to be to deprive the Indian of his inalienable rights as a Canadian citizen — the original Canadian. A few examples should serve to illustrate the justice of this legal masterpiece.

#### Subsection (1) of section 18

"Subject to the provisions of this Act, reserves shall be held by Her Majesty for the use and benefit of the respective bands for which they were set apart; and subject to this Act and to the terms of any treaty or surrender, the **Governor-in-Council** may determine whether any purpose for which bands in a reserve are used or are to be used is for the use and benefit of the band." 1951, C.29, S.18.

#### Subsection (1) of section 20

"No Indian is lawfully in possession of land in a reserve unless, **with the approval of the Minister**, possession of the land has been allotted to him by the council of the band".

#### Subsection (1) of section 32

"A transaction of any kind whereby a band or a member thereof purports to sell, barter, exchange, give or otherwise dispose of cattle or other animals, grain or hay, whether wild or cultivated, or root crops or plants or their products from a reserve in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta, to a person other than a member of that band, is void unless the **superintendent** approves the transaction in writing".

#### Subsection (1) of section 34

"A band shall insure that the roads, bridges, ditches and fences within the reserve occupied by that band are maintained in accordance with instructions issued from time to time by the **superintendent**".

This is particularly interesting with relevance to Lennox Island. They have one small rubber tire farm tractor which is completely inadequate for road maintenance. Any decent roads do not exist, they have not been given the required machinery for road building or maintenance and if it was given there would be no immediate means of conveying it across the three-quarter mile of water.

Section 64 under heading of Management of Indian Moneys.

"With the consent of the council of a band, the **Minister** may authorize and direct the expenditure of capital moneys of the band".

It proceeds to elaborate on a number of things on which the moneys may be expended. There seems, however, to be a couple of discrepancies. (1) Indians Moneys as such (on P.E.I.) don't seem to exist, except in a very limited supply. (2) Many of the specified points upon which it could be expended don't seem to exist. The reason could be a result of the lack of no. (1), which is a matter of government policy; as a means of preventing the advancement of the Indian people, which is a matter of government policy; as a means of perpetuating Indian Af-

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