

GENERAL NEWS

COMPLETE FAMILY TRAINING FOR INDIANS IN ALBERTA?

OTTAWA:

A \$5,000,000 Alberta Indian education centre designed to train entire family units was proposed Tuesday to the Commons Indian affairs committee by the Indian Association of Alberta.

Harold Cardinal, president of the association, said the centre would not take over from the provincial school system but was intended to support and complement it. But the white man's school system got a pretty thorough blasting from the Indians during the two committee sessions.

Clive Linklater, an association staff member, said the Indian's whole educational experience in the regular school system is one of cultural conflict.

"Cultural shock" resulted in a high drop-out rate - about 98 per cent of Indian children starting in Grade 1, never reach Grade 12.

"The whole system is geared to de-Indianizing Indians," he said.

"For many years the white people didn't believe that Indians were people at all. . . and I don't think attitudes have changed very much in the last 400 years."

White people expected Indians to change their attitudes overnight but were not willing to change themselves.

Eugene Steinhauer, central vice-president of the association, said the schools operated by religious groups are a destructive influence on Indian culture. Children at one were told that beating drums was evil.

Roy Lepenburg, an educational consultant to the association, said the most serious problem was the lack of Indian autonomy in education.

He said studies carried out on Indian education have seldom reached the Indians themselves. "Indian people are able to articulate their problems."

The federal government should not pour money into provincial school construction to provide room for Indians without approval from the Indian band concerned.

Mr. Cardinal complained that the annual grant to the association which comes through the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Agency, was cut this year to \$60,000 from \$200,000 even after the association had been promised it would get the same as last year. He said the association needed \$1,300,000 to do research into economic development for Indians.

Echo Plea:-

Meanwhile the Saskatchewan Indian Federation was making a similar plea before the Canadian Conference on Educational Research.

Rev. Andre Renaud, of the University of Saskatchewan, said Saskatchewan Indian chiefs had asked the federal government to turn over all money for education to the Indians themselves.

"They feel that if the government turns the money over to the province it will get lost."

Father Renaud said the federation leaders propose a province-wide Indian school board which would manage the money for Indian education, hire expert assistance and oversee the performance of the schools.

Walter Currie, president of the Canadian Indian-Eskimo Association, said the educational system "has failed miserably" leaving Indians with two alternatives - become "brown-skinned whites", or drop out.

"The majority have dropped out," he said.

He accused educational researchers of preparing their studies to get plaudits from their colleagues.

"They never come back to ask the Indians what they think of the results, or get their opinions."

Note: The Western Indians are certainly taking the "bull by the horns". We've mentioned before that they are a smart bunch out there. (we've met some of them.) One good result of the Indian Proposed Policy - it has made the Indians aware of their identity and their heritage which they do not intend to allow to be plowed under.

\* Editors.

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