

# A LOOK AT THE PARLIAMENTARY REPORT ON INDIAN & ESKIMO EDUCATION

*From an article by Father Levaque, secretary of the "Oblate Indian and Eskimo Commission," intended more particularly for the Indians, we extract the following excerpts which concern as much the Eskimo population.*

The House Standing Committee on Indian Affairs has served the Indian people by publishing the blueprint for a school which they can build themselves. In June 1971, when the Committee Report was tabled in the House of Commons, Chief George Manuel, President of the National Indian Brotherhood, said: "This is the most important Parliamentary Report of the decade as far as Indian people are concerned. It is the first time an official source has understood what we have been trying to say for the past hundred years or more."

Here is a report which grew out of the testimony and evidence of eighty witnesses, gathered by the Committee over a period of two years. The voices were of the old and young, of parents, students, educators and leaders. They were sincere, they were honest, and for once, they were heard! What a waste if they are not heeded! [ . . . ]

[After the preamble, follow 17 recommendations; here are some of them:]

"2. That all curriculums within the federal program be revised to include:

a) Substantially more Indian history, including Indian contributions to the economy, science, medicine, agriculture, exploration, etc.

b) Special courses in Indian culture, music, art, handicrafts, etc., and that pressure be brought upon the respective provincial systems to inaugurate similar reforms wherever Indian children are being taught.

"3. That the language of instruction at the pre-school level and up to the first or second year of primary school should be in the language of the local Indian or Eskimo community, with secondary languages English and/or French being introduced gradually through the pre-school and primary period, and that courses linked to the local Indian or Eskimo culture continue to be taught in the local language throughout the primary level of school.

"4. That decisions regarding the initial languages of instruction and the timing of introduction of secondary and tertiary languages should only be made after consultation with and clear approval from the majority of parents in the communities concerned. [ . . . ]

"7. That the existing secondary level student residence system for Indian and Eskimo children be phased out wherever the establishment of local high schools [ . . . ] is possible and is desired by a majority of local parents.