

*Administration.*—The primary function of the Indian Affairs Branch, under the Citizenship and Immigration Act and the Indian Act, is to administer the affairs of the Indians of Canada in a manner that will enable them to become increasingly self-supporting and independent. The functions of the Branch include the management of Indian reserves and surrendered lands, trust funds, welfare projects, relief, family allowances, education, descent of property, rehabilitation of Indian veterans on reserves, Indian treaty obligations, enfranchisement of Indians and other matters.

The Indian Act currently in effect was drafted following inquiry into Indian affairs by a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons during 1946, 1947 and 1948, and subsequent conferences with representative Indian groups. Proclaimed Sept. 4, 1951, the new Act succeeds an Act that was first consolidated in 1876 and amended from time to time.

The Indian Act provides a measure of self-government on reserves through Band councils chosen according to tribal custom or under an elective system of secret ballot. The various expenditures of Band funds, with few exceptions, require the consent of the Band council, comprising a chief and councillors. The right to vote in Band elections and other votes is extended to all members of a Band, men and women, who have reached the age of twenty-one years. A number of Indian women have been elected to office since the new Act came into force. Secrecy of voting has been provided under election regulations. The powers of Band councils to make by-laws correspond in a general way with those exercised by councils in a rural municipality.

Indians who are veterans of World Wars I or II and their wives may vote in federal elections. Indians who live off the reserve, under certain circumstances, also have the right to vote, while Indians who live on the reserve may vote if they waive exemption to taxation on personal property such as earnings or other incomes received on the reserve. Indians may sue and be sued, subject to provisions of the Indian Act which exempts from seizure real and personal property held on the reserve.

Enfranchisement, the removal of all legal distinction between Indians and other members of the community, is provided for under the Indian Act. An enfranchised Indian is no longer subject to the provisions of the Act. In order to facilitate enfranchisement of Indian Bands, agreements may be entered into with provincial or municipal authorities to provide financial assistance to indigent, infirm, or aged members of the enfranchised Band.

The nomadic existence followed by Bands of Indian hunters is gradually giving way to a more stable way of life. Many Indians are profitably engaged in the fishing industry on the British Columbia coast; Indians across Canada are being encouraged to engage in agricultural pursuits and are prominent in many other trades and occupations. For example, the reputation of the Indians from the Caughnawaga Reserve, near Montreal, as skilful structural steel workers is known throughout North America.

The Indian Affairs Branch takes a census of the Indian population under its jurisdiction at five-year intervals. The figures for 1949 given in Tables 23 and 24 are the latest available.