

INDIAN AGENTS AND THE "INDIAN PROBLEM" IN CANADA IN 1946: RECONSIDERING THE THEORY OF COERCIVE TUTELAGE¹

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Abstract / Resume

This paper examines Noel Dyck's characterization of Indian Agents as agents of coercive tutelage. Dyck sees Indian Agents as quintessential organization men who uncritically reproduced institutional definitions of the "Indian problem." Using the responses of Indian Agents to a request made in 1946 by the Minister of Mines and Resources 1946 for their views on what they saw as the "Indian problem," this paper argues that while some Indian Agents did articulate racist and blaming the victim conceptions of the so-called "Indian problem," others offered explanations of the problem that implicated their own practices, and the bureaucracy for which they worked, as the source of "the problem."

Cet article traite de la caractérisation décrite par Noël Dyck, des délégués indiens en tant qu'agents d'une tutelle coercitive. Selon Noël Dyck, le délégués indiens étaient l'essence même de bureaucrates qui ont reproduit, de manière non critique, les définitions institutionnelles du "problème indien". A partir des réponses d'une requête, faite en 1946 par le Ministre des Mines et Ressources pour connaître leurs points de vue quant au "problème indien", cet article démontre que, bien que d'une part certains délégués aient eu des perceptions racistes et "blâment la victime" du soi-disant "problème indien", d'autres délégués par contre ont émis l'explication que leurs propres pratiques, ainsi que la bureaucratie qui les employait, était la source même du "problème indien".

There are few tasks, in my judgment, that present a greater challenge than the task confronting us in the care and advancement of the Indian population of this country. While the results at times appear disappointing, nevertheless we can proceed—extracting a measure of satisfaction from the consciousness that we are assisting a group of people to adapt themselves to modern conditions and in so doing, encourage them to assume a greater share in the rights, duties and responsibilities of democratic citizenship. In this task, the thought of failure should have no place in our minds.²

Nine months after his appointment in 1945 as Minister of the Department of Mines and Resources, which at the time was the institutional home of the Indian Affairs Branch of the federal government, J. Allison Glen sent a personal message to all Indian Agents outlining the post-war Liberal government's new program for the advancement of the Indian population of Canada.³ This new program involved, among other things, the construction of Indian agency buildings, schools and hospitals, the upgrading of Indian homes, the provision for Indian war veterans under the *Indian Veterans Lands Act*, the redevelopment of the fur industry, and a renewed emphasis on the organization and operation of community farms on Reserves. Glen's letter also articulated the two age-old assumptions that have guided the Department of Indian Affairs since at least the middle of the 19th century. First, like each new cohort of administrators within Indian Affairs, Glen was confident that the solution to the "Indian Problem" was just a generation or two away. And second, like other administrators within Indian Affairs, he believed that the solution to the problem could only be achieved by the continued and careful guidance of the employees of the Branch. In other words, through the hard work and perseverance of Indian Affairs officials, Indian people would soon no longer require the protection of the *Indian Act* and would become full, self-regulating and assimilated citizens of Canada.

Despite this blend of paternalistic confidence and optimism, the new Minister also admitted that all was not well with the Branch's relationship with Indian people. Glen hinted that after more than sixty years of operation, the Indian Affairs Branch still faced several obstacles in relation to its mission to "advance" the Indian population of Canada. In particular, the Minister noted three interrelated problems with Indian peoples' relationship with the government. First, he recognized that Indian people lacked trust in the motives and activities of the Indian Affairs Branch. Second, he felt that Indian people had become too dependent upon the state. And third, he felt that the lack of trust and the excessive dependence on the state were

leading to what he regarded as the unproductive and unwarranted politicization of Indian people in the country.⁴ The Minister's wider political dilemma at the time, then, was to figure out how to control the political activity of Indian people and channel it into what he defined as socially acceptable avenues. As the Minister put it, this is an

interest which, in my judgement, should be guided by our officers so far as it is possible to guide into sane and constructive channels... Indians should be encouraged to exercise the greatest possible care in the selection and election of their officers. They should be encouraged also to exercise moderation in their claims for public support.⁵

As part of a larger effort to defuse the politicization of Indian people Glen's letter also contained an invitation to Indian Agents to comment directly and confidentially to him on two troubling questions: 1) how could officials of the Indian Affairs Branch establish a "greater measure of confidence on the part of the Indians in the department and in the good intentions of its officials?", and 2) how could the Indian Affairs Branch encourage the "gospel of self-help amongst the Indians"?⁶ In other words, the Minister wanted to find out what his Indian Agents defined as the "Indian problem", and what they thought should be done about the problem.

The responses of Indian Agents to this request for input constitutes an opportunity to further understand the attitudes of what Noel Dyck calls "agents of tutelage" (1991). He argues that one of the strategies employed by the Indian Affairs Branch, as an agency of tutelage, has been to explain its failure to meet stated policy and programme objectives in terms of the supposedly inherent inadequacies of Indian people and to offer increasingly more technical and bureaucratic solutions to the "Indian problem". In adopting the institution's definition of the situation, the employees of the Indian Affairs Branch are also seen to have defined the "Indian problem" as a problem that Indians had, and the problem could be solved through more and better state intervention into their lives. Put simply, the structure of tutelage was racist, and so too were the agents of tutelage. If Dyck's understanding of the place of Indian Agents in the structure of tutelage is correct, then one would expect that the responses of Indian Agents to the Minister of Mines and Resources' survey about what they saw as the "Indian problem" would reflect a mixture of racist blaming the victim ideology and technical/bureaucratic proposals for solving the problem. This paper, then, is an empirical test of Dyck's understanding of the attitudes Indian Agents' held about Indian people and their relationship with the state. It shows that Indian Agents' definition of the situation did, as Dyck predicts, involve a mixture of blaming the victim ideology and technical/bureaucratic assess-

ments of, and solutions to, the problem. However, some of the responses of Indian Agents also reflected an awareness that Indian peoples' dependence on, and lack of trust in the motives of, the Indian Affairs Branch were due to the nature of the social relationships that existed between Indian people, White society in general, and the Indian Affairs Branch in particular. They also offered solutions that went beyond blaming the victim and technical/bureaucratic changes in administrative structure. Some Indian Agents questioned their own roles in the system within which they worked, and recognized some of the contradictions associated with their social position as tutelage agents.

Indian Agents as Agents of Coercive Tutelage

Coercive tutelage is defined by Dyck as a form of arbitrary restraint or guardianship exercised by one party over another, and has become institutionalized in the form of the Indian Affairs Branch relationship with Indian communities (Dyck, 1991:3). Indian Agents figure as key actors in the history of the system of coercive tutelage. For nearly a century the Indian Agency was the main administrative unit within the field operations of the Branch. Until it was abolished to make way for a new district administrative structure in the late 1960s, the Indian Agency normally included a number of different Bands and Reserves within a particular geographical area, and sometimes could contain Bands that had agreed to different treaties. In a few cases, such as the Blood Reserve in southern Alberta, the Reserve was so large that it constituted an Agency in and of itself. Each Indian Agency was under the control of an Indian Agent whose duties varied according to shifts in policy emphasis, geography, the degree of resistance on the part of Indians under their control and a variety of other local ecological, political and economic conditions (see Dunning, 1964; Brownlie, 1994). Generally, though, when the position of Indian Agent was first established in the early 1870s, the duties tended to involve the administration of the terms of the treaties that were agreed to between the British Crown, and later the Canadian government, and Indian people. As the federal government began to pursue its nation building strategy more aggressively in the late 1870s, Indian policy and administration began to focus more on the need to socially transform Indian people and Indian communities (Gibbins and Ponting, 1986). Indian Agencies became smaller in size than the treaty area and Indian Agents were expected to take a more active role in the social control and social transformation of Indian people, culture and communities. Depending upon the context, Indian Agents could have had a number of employees working under them such as farming instructors, clerks, rations issuers, and interpreters. Indian Agents were also

accorded a variety of new powers and responsibilities, including: the power to recommend that a Chief or councillor be deposed (Satzewich and Mahood, 1994); the power to enforce attendance at residential schools (Miller, 1996); the control of Indian movements off Reserves (Barron, 1988); the control over religious and cultural practices that were deemed by the state to be inimical with "civilized" behaviour (Pettipas, 1994); the issuing of rations to those defined as in need (Satzewich, 1996); and acting as a justice of the peace when it came to Indian infractions of the law.

Dyck regards the Indian Agent as the quintessential organization man (virtually all Indian Agents were men) who was caught within a bureaucratic and racist structure that was beyond his individual control. Despite a variety of inclinations and intentions they may have had before taking up the position, their own values, beliefs and practices were eventually subordinated to the pre-existing role responsibilities and racist assumptions and beliefs of the bureaucracy for which they worked (Dyck, 1991:77). According to Dyck, one of the key elements of the accommodation of Indian Agents to the realities of the system of coercive tutelage that they worked within was the adoption of the Branch's justification of its own existence.

In order to justify the manner in which they were granted power by their agencies over Aboriginal peoples, they had to commence by denying the worth and abilities of Indians. Unless they accepted the proposition that Native peoples could not lead a decent life without the direction that they provided, tutelage agents were cast in a role in which they would arbitrarily and self-consciously exercise power over other human beings for no good reason (*Ibid.*).

Dyck argues that in the face of the limited success associated with efforts to assimilate Indian people and solve what they perceived to be the "Indian problem", Indian Agents, as agents of tutelage, developed two specific and interrelated justifications for their continued domination. First, Indian Agents adopted a racist form of blaming the victim ideology in which the lack of institutional success was attributed to the shortcomings of Indian people themselves. Second, their proposed solutions to the so-called "Indian problem" were technical in nature, in that the failure to meet institutional goals prompted suggestions for more and better state administration and management (*Ibid.*:32).

Dyck may be correct in his assessment of the Indian Agents' definition of the situation. However, aside from a few anecdotal references to the activities and beliefs of select individual Indian Agents, little systematic evidence is offered to support this characterization of the Indian Agent. While some social scientists have cogently argued for the necessity to

incorporate the voice of the subjects of oppressive practices into academic research, particularly when it comes to certain categories of women and racialized minorities (see Agnew, 1996), social scientists seem to have become less interested in the study of the voices of the relatively and absolutely powerful. If one of the aims of sociological analysis is a more complete understanding of the relationship between Indian people and the Canadian state, then it is equally important for social scientists to try to understand the subjectivity of those who have been defined as oppressors (Memmi, 1965).

This is particularly important when it comes to the analysis of the Indian Affairs Branch of the federal government, because, as Dyck himself notes,

the manner in which tutelage agencies have defined Indians has... become an integral part of the Indian "problem". To have been empowered to control social, political, and economic life in native communities, they have been in a position to respond to those factors which they accept as being relevant to the Indian "problem" and to ignore those that have not fitted their definition of it (1991:78).

One of the aims of this paper is, therefore, to assess empirically the extent to which Indian Agents articulated the two justifications of their rule outlined by Dyck. In other words, did the Indian Agents who responded to the Minister's letter define the situation in racist, blaming-the-victim terms, and did they simply offer bureaucratic/technical solutions to what they defined as the Indian problem, or did some of them recognize that the problem lay in the more complex and multi-layered nature of the historically constituted social relationships within which Indian people found themselves enmeshed?

Source of Data

The main source of data for this paper comes from the responses of Indian Agents to the request of the Minister of Mines and Resources for input into the questions of why there was a lack of confidence on the part of Indian people in the officials of the Indian Affairs Branch, and how the Branch could encourage the gospel of self-help among its charges. In 1946, there were ninety-four Indian Agents working in Agencies across the country. Thirty-eight out of ninety-four Indian Agents responded to the Minister's survey, for a response rate of forty per cent. There were eight responses from Indian Agents in British Columbia, thirteen from the three prairie provinces, thirteen from Ontario, three from Quebec and one from the Maritimes. There were no responses from Indian Agents in the Yukon or the Northwest Territories.

There are obvious methodological problems involved with using these letters as a source of survey-type data. First, there are no independent variables that can be used to draw correlations between the way that Indian Agents defined the "Indian problem" and certain background variables. We do not know, for example whether the articulation of certain ideas was associated with certain characteristics such as ethnicity, age, education, and years of service of Indian Agents. Even if there were independent variables that could be incorporated into the survey, the number of responses is not large enough to undertake quantitative statistical analysis. Second, it is difficult to determine whether there are any response biases. It is not known, for example, whether those Indian Agents who did not respond held opinions on the two questions that were any different from those who did respond, or whether non-response reflected a lack of trust in the Minister's commitment to confidentiality. Third, there were clear and obvious power relations involved in the process of data collection. The person asking the questions was the Indian Agents' boss, and so there is the possibility that the Indian Agents' responses could simply reflect ingratiation and self-promotion.

In defense of the use of this data it could be argued that there should be a structurally based response bias towards blaming the victim, and hence confirming Dyck's characterization of the attitudes of Indian Agents. This generation of Indian Agents has been termed "the old guard" within Indian Affairs by Ponting and Gibbins (1980). They are commonly assumed to have been highly paternalistic, coercive, racist and ethnocentric in their attitudes and dealings with their Indian charges. If there is a bias in the data it would, therefore, be in the direction of supporting Dyck's argument. If, as Dyck suggests, Indian Agents were classic organization men, it should be expected that they simply recounted what they thought their boss wanted to hear. If, on the other hand, Indian Agents did not reflect wider government assumptions about the nature of the so-called Indian problem, then the findings are all that more significant.

In only two cases did Indian Agents use the exercise as an obvious effort at ingratiation or self-promotion.⁷ The remaining respondents seemed to take the request for input seriously and the relatively high response rate may have been due to the Minister's guarantee of confidentiality. The average length of response to the Minister's letter was two single-spaced legal sized pages, and the longest consisted of eight single-spaced legal-sized pages. For individuals who were burdened with heavy administrative duties, this was a considerable effort. In fact, many of the respondents welcomed the opportunity to open up directly to the Minister. Throughout its history, the Indian Affairs Branch has been a highly bureaucratic organi-

zation characterized by an obsession with cost-cutting and a significant degree of top-down decision making (Tittley, 1986). Plans, policies and initiatives have tended to be formulated at headquarters in Ottawa, and these were expected to be carried out by the field personnel. Field personnel were rarely invited or encouraged to comment on policy questions, and indeed were actively discouraged from doing so. Furthermore, the reduction of Indian Affairs to the status of a *Branch* of the Ministry of Mines and Resources in 1936 turned Indian Affairs into something of a political backwater within the federal bureaucracy, and so many Indian Agents believed that their labour had gone unrecognized and unrewarded within the federal bureaucracy. In this context, M.S. Todd, the Indian Agent from Alert Bay in British Columbia was elated when he received the letter from the new Minister. Todd told Glen that "this is the first time that I have ever received such a letter from our Minister". He went on to confess that "the field officers... have felt for a number of years past that we had, more or less, lost contact with Ottawa".⁸ F.J.C. Ball, echoed a similar sense of being alienated from decision makers in Ottawa when he told the Minister that

in the past four or five years, the field service in this Province has been cut off from contact with the Department in Ottawa, several instructions being received which funnel everything through the Indian Commissioner's office, so that the Department receives only the information one man wishes them to have rather than the opinions of 17 Indian Agents [in British Columbia] who are actually in close contact with the Indians. Every Indian Agent of more than a few years' service makes the same complaint, that they do not have any direct contact with Ottawa now. The Indian Commissioner, and those to whom he reports, have had no field experience whatever or any close contact with the Indians.⁹

In the context of feeling alienated from, and unappreciated by, decision makers in Ottawa, the majority of Indian Agents who responded to the Minister's request for input seemed to use it as an opportunity to genuinely air their accumulated concerns about the "Indian problem", the way that the Branch operated in the past, and how it could better achieve its ends. The responses Indian Agents' provided to the Minister's request, then, are a source of data that gives us a rare glimpse into the world of the Indian Agent in 1946.

The responses of Indian Agents were broken down into *explanations* of and *proposed solutions* to the so-called Indian problem. Each explanation and solution offered by the Indian Agent was counted and recorded. Indian Agents usually offered a mix of explanations and solutions and hence their

number exceeds the number of Indian Agents who responded to the Ministers letter. I first examine how Indian Agents explained Indian peoples' lack of confidence in,¹⁰ and dependence that Indian people had on, the Indian Affairs Branch. In other words, I first examined what Indian Agents defined as the "Indian problem". Responses to these two questions were divided into two general categories. The first kind of responses were conceptualized as "blaming the victim" explanations (Ryan, 1971). These explanations focused on the individual and collective inadequacies of Indian people themselves as the source of the problem. The second category of response consisted of what I call *relational explanations* of the problem. These explanations focused on particular kinds of social relationships as the source of the problem. They saw the distrust and dependence of Indian people not so much in terms of inherent inadequacies of Indian people but rather in the nature of Indians' social relationships with non-Indians and with the Indian Affairs Branch. In other words, part of the problem was also identified as White society.

Second, I examine the solutions that Indian Agents offered to the Indian problem. The proposed solutions were again coded into two categories: the first suggested certain changes in Indian subjectivity and the second consisted of changes in the structure of the bureaucracy that governed Indian communities.

Indian Agents and Their Interpretation of the Indian Problem

As indicated in Table 1, the thirty-eight Indian Agents who responded to the Minister offered sixty-two explanations of the interrelated problems of a lack of trust in the officials of the Indian Affairs Branch and of Indian peoples' excessive dependence on the state: twenty-nine (45%) explanations involved some form of blaming the victim while the remaining thirty-three (55%) were relational explanations. Since just under one-half of the responses of Indian Agents could be termed blaming the victim, there is some support for Dyck's interpretation of Indian Agents as agents of coercive tutelage. On the other hand, fifty-five percent of the responses were relational in nature. They suggested that part of the problem lay in the historically constituted social relationships within which Indian people were embedded.

Blaming the Victim

There were two main versions of blaming the victim explanation that were articulated by Indian Agents: one focused on the supposed racial, cultural and individual inferiority of Indian people while the other focused on

Table 1: Indian Agents' Explanations of the Indian Problem

Blaming the Victim Explanations	29
Indian inadequacies	
racial inferiority	7
lack of ambition	9
inherent distrust of Whites	4
Agitators	
Whites	6
Indians	3
Relational Explanations	33
Exploitation/racism of Whites	4
Lack of cultural sensitivity	3
Historical/Treaty/Land Claims Grievances	6
Bureaucratic paternalism	5
Poor services	
residential schools	3
day schools	3
medical services	5
Reneging on past promises	4

Source: "Correspondence from various Indian Agents to the Honourable J. Allison Glen, Minister of Mines and Resources, offering suggestions for improvements on the reserves and in relations with the Indian Department, 1946". NAC, R.G. 10, vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.

the presence of various kinds of agitators who were poisoning Indian/state relations.

Explanations which specifically focused on Indian peoples' supposed inferiority as the source of the problem took a number of forms. First, without elaborating in much detail, a small number of Indian Agents simply felt that Indians had a "natural distrust of the white man".¹¹ Second, there were those explanations that reflected a confused mixture of eugenic, Social Darwinist and environmental theories and suggested that dependence and mistrust were due to the racial inferiority of Indian people. F. Earl Anfield, Indian Agent at Bella Coola, British Columbia, argued for example, that "the Indian problem is basically psychological and the removal by uplift of a racial inferiority complex must be paramount in any approach to Indian rehabili-

tation".¹² Others saw the problem even more deterministically. H.E. Taylor, from the Kamloops Agency in British Columbia suggested that

It would seem that the mental development of the western Indians is behind that of the eastern Indians. During my thirty years amongst the Indians from Saskatchewan to the west coast of Vancouver Island, I have no personal knowledge of any Indian passing junior matriculation.¹³

On the other hand, H. Lariviere, Indian Agent at the Abitibi Indian Agency in Quebec was not particularly impressed with "his" eastern Indians either: "my Indians", he claimed, "are all more or less the primitive types".¹⁴

Some, however, offered a mixture of both pessimism and hope about the prospects for the "advancement" of Indian people. J.A. Marleau, Indian Agent at Sturgeon Falls, Ontario, suggested that "for the average Indian of fifty years of age or over, the case is hopeless, but the younger generation, through mixing with whites at school, work, sports, also reading and listening to the radio, are much more amenable to advancement".¹⁵ Thus, while old Indians were beyond redemption, younger Indians were seen to be capable of change.

Inherent laziness and natural dependence were also identified by some Indian Agents as the source of the problem. According to G.E. Hurl, Indian Agent at Christian Island, Ontario,

The Indians have always been dependent, even in these days of when you would think that they could be more self reliant, I have them coming to me asking if I will do this and that for them....¹⁶

Indian Agent W. Young from the Griswold Agency in Manitoba shared Hurl's assessment, and described Indian people in his agency as "indifferent" and "indolent", and a people who "prefer to sit and sun themselves" rather than work.¹⁷ Robert Lamothe from the Notre Dame du Nord Agency in Quebec told the Minister that "the Indians are generally a shiftless lot ... & wont help themselves if they can get help elsewhere".¹⁸

The second general version of blaming the victim explanation of dependence and distrust was that both Indian and non-Indian agitators were sewing the seeds of discontent within Indian communities for their own self-serving purposes. These kinds of responses were categorized as forms of blaming the victim because they implied that Indian people did not really know any better but to listen to uninformed and self-interested Indians and Whites. Three Indian Agents referred vaguely to "minority groups" on Reserves "whose only policy is and always has been to oppose local administration, destroy and oppose governmental assistance and council, and generally, unduly criticize their Indian Councils."¹⁹ Some were less

circumspect and criticized specific Indian leaders with whom they had dealings in the past. F.J.C. Ball, Indian Agent at Vancouver, engaged in the explicit character assassination of Andrew Paull, one of the first leaders of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, as a way of undermining the legitimacy of Native claims against the government. Ball suggested to the Minister that Paull was "a rabble rouser" who raised money by the "exploitation of the less advanced Indians" in the province.²⁰

Others attributed the lack of confidence in Indian Affairs to certain groups of White agitators. According to the Indian Agent at Vanderhoof, British Columbia, the suspicion on the part of Indians towards the officials of the Indian Affairs Branch was, "to some extent, [handed down] by advice and guidance of a certain class of the white population, to which some Indians are prone to lend a ready ear".²¹ This sentiment was also echoed by H.E. Taylor, Indian Agent at Kamloops, British Columbia, who suggested that the problem lay in "the readiness of so many Indians to give credence to the statements of ill-informed and irresponsible whites, who confuse the Indian with a hodge-podge of racial ideas and malicious information".²² The presence of "meddling" Whites was not simply seen as a problem in British Columbia. Samuel Devlin, Indian Agent at Parry Sound, Ontario also recognized that "irresponsible white people [were to blame], many of whom should know better but apparently do not know any more than the Indian himself just what his standing is with regard to the Dominion Government and the other citizens of Canada".²³ Howe, Taylor and Devlin were likely referring to the influence within Indian communities of missionaries and lawyers, two groups who had sometimes acted as advocates on behalf of Indian people. The reluctance of Indian Agents to specifically name missionaries as part of the problem may have been due to the power they believed missionary organizations had within the Indian Affairs Branch in Ottawa.

In Saskatchewan, however, one Indian Agent specifically fingered provincial Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) politicians for unnecessarily politicizing Indian people. N.J. Mcleod, Indian Agent at Duck Lake, Saskatchewan included in his already lengthy five page letter to the Minister a three page minute of a meeting between certain Saskatchewan Indian leaders and two representatives of the CCF in 1945. According to Mcleod, who had apparently been invited to the meeting by some of the Indian leaders, the two CCF members who were present

exhorted the Indians to form a Provincial Organization and to take all of their grievances to Chief Red Eagle (Premier T.C. Douglas) and endeavoured to impress on the minds of the

Indians present how badly they had been neglected and held down by the Indian Affairs Branch officials and Indian Agents.²⁴

The CCF's motives for contributing to the politicization of Saskatchewan Indians appear to have been twofold. First, the CCF condemned the neglect and irresponsibility in federal Indian Administration as a way of indirectly discrediting their provincial Liberal and Conservative rivals. In other words, they tried to link the policies of the two ruling federal parties with their provincial counterparts. Second, the CCF considered itself the champion of underprivileged minorities and therefore took up the Indian cause partly because of political philosophy.²⁵

Relational Explanations

As Table 1 indicates, not all of the explanations offered by Indian Agents' of "the Indian problem" involved blaming the victim. Indeed, the majority of explanations that Indian Agents offered for the existence of "the Indian problem" focused on the nature of the historically constituted social relationships between Indians and Whites in general, and officials of the Indian Affairs branch in particular. As indicated in Table 1, there were six relational explanations that Indian Agents offered for Indian dependence and distrust.

The most frequently cited relational explanation of "the Indian problem" focused on the poor quality services that Indian people were receiving from the government. In particular, Indian Agents identified poor schooling for children, and poor health care for communities as a major source of "the problem". In relation to schooling, some Indian Agents were critical of day schools operated by Indian Affairs while others reserved their criticisms for residential schools. In relation to day schools, Indian Agents felt that the quality of teachers was poor, and that this was related to the low pay that Indian Affairs offered its teachers. "May I stress here that a higher standard of teachers could be obtained and kept in our schools if the salary scale could be increased", J.G. Burk at Port Arthur Ontario wrote to the Minister.²⁶ A similar sentiment was echoed by J. Gillett, Indian Agent in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, who suggested to the Minister that the yearly salary of one thousand dollars provided by Indian Affairs for day school teachers was woefully inadequate: "the result is that the only people attracted to the work are those who are unable to secure a position elsewhere."²⁷ These sentiments were, incidentally, similar to the concerns raised about day schools by Indian parents at the same time.

Others, however, raised concerns about residential schools. According to Indian Agent A.G. Smith of Birtle, Manitoba,

in my opinion our educational system should be revised. Pupils in residential schools should be in the classroom all day, instead of for only half the day as they are in most schools. I am pleased to say they [sic] for the last year they have attended classes all day in the Birtle school. This means that if a child starts school at 7 years of age he would be in grade 8 or 9 at 16 years of age, instead of grade 4 as many of them are under our present system. Of course they are supposed to be learning farming, gardening, sewing, cooking, etc. during the half day that they are not in the classroom, but in my opinion they are doing chores. Pupils who desire to take vocational training and are worthy of it, should have this chance in a residential school set aside for this purpose, to accommodate pupils over 16 years of age...The Indians are all clamouring for day schools, and I do not blame them. Personally, I hate the responsibility of forcing parents to send their children to residential schools at the age of seven. They will run away from school and there is always the possibility of them freezing to death, when doing so in winter.²⁸

Smith clearly recognized that much of the "vocational training" that occurred in the residential schools was in fact a way to use cheap child labour to help missionaries sustain their operations. Nor did he relish forcing Indian children to attend the schools, an aspect of their job that many other post-war Indian Agents regarded as one of their most obnoxious duties.

Two other Indian Agents, both of whom worked in British Columbia, also recommended closing down the residential schools. F. Earl Anfield, Indian Agent at Bella Coola, somewhat timidly suggested that "it is quite possible that the Residential School system as we have it to-day should be abolished and these schools used as social welfare and health clinics and in some instances as advanced high schools."²⁹ The Indian Agent at Vanderhoof, British Columbia also raised concerns over the negative effect that the residential school system had on both Indian communities and their relationship with the Indian Affairs Branch. R. Howe suggested to the Minister that

The Residential School is overcrowded and cannot accommodate half the children of school age. The fact that children are taken away from the home and family to residential schools for ten months in the year is the source of a great deal of discontent amongst the parents. I am convinced that day schools located on Reserves are more practicable.³⁰

In addition to poor schooling, Indian Agents also suggested that inadequate health services were also partly to blame for both Indian dependence

and lack of confidence in the Department. Howe, in addition to questioning the wisdom behind residential schools, felt that part of the problem with Indian peoples' lack of self reliance was their "generally poor health". He told the Minister that

Little ambition or initiative can be expected from Indians afflicted with diseased bodies, and I regret to say that there are a good many in the category, particularly in remote bands in the northern part of this Agency where it has not been possible in the past to render adequate medical supervision. Additional medical and health services will greatly improve the lot of these Indians.³¹

Others felt that the lack of health care was breeding more than just a lack of initiative; it was also feeding Indian resentment against the Department. Gifford Swartman, from Sioux Lookout, Ontario, explained that

Many of our Indians feel that the government has not provided adequate medical services. This is also causing considerable criticism and dissatisfaction The Indians believe that all the diseases and epidemics are products of the Whiteman, and if the country had been left to them there would be no need of medical or health services, but now that almost every known type of disease has been spread among them they expect medical aidIn fact at present I believe this to be the crux of the whole situation insofar as the establishment of friendly relations and confidence is concerned.³²

The second most frequently cited relational explanation of "the Indian problem" focused on historical grievances stemming from contested treaty interpretations and land claims disputes. While not particularly sympathetic to the arguments that Indian people used to articulate their historical grievances, P.G. Lazenby nevertheless admitted that he had to battle constantly with the distrust that existed on the Peguis Reserve in Manitoba and that this distrust was rooted in unfilled promises stemming from a land surrender at the St. Peter's Reserve near Selkirk in 1907. Lazenby admitted that "this distrust has been carried over for a long period of years, and is very potent today....It is still very much alive even after all these years, and is bound to be somewhat of a handicap to efforts for progress".³³

Several Indian Agents noted that Indian oral traditions helped reproduce understandings of the terms of the treaties that were different from those held by the current representatives of the federal government and which were codified in current Indian policy. The Indian Agent at Parry Sound, suggested that in order to resolve administrative problems stemming from what he regarded as Indians "misunderstanding" of historical

treaties, what was needed was a "new charter setting forth the actual rights and privileges of the Indian as they exist at this date, together with his responsibilities". This was necessary according to Samuel Devlin, because "too many Indians have their minds clogged with very hazy notions as to the rights which they are entitled to enjoy under the various treaties which were from time to time made with them. Many of these ideas are mere hearsay and have no foundation in fact and until we can show the Indian definitely just what his rights and responsibilities are, we are bound to be from time to time involved in bootless arguments".³⁴ While not as skeptical as Devlin about the historical obligations contained in the treaties, J.K. Burk, Indian Agent at Port Arthur, Ontario, also recognized the importance that Indian peoples' understandings of past treaties played in influencing Indian behaviour and structuring their relationship with Indian Affairs: "It is very hard to explain to our Indians, who derive their living to a large extent by hunting, that they must conform to the provincial game laws. They feel that the Robinson Treaty [of 1850], giving them the Right to hunt, trap and fish as long as the sun shines, the rivers flow, and the grass grows, should be upheld".³⁵

Third, government paternalism was also seen to be partially responsible for the lack of trust and too great a level of dependence. According to J.L. Bryant, Indian Agent at the Pelly Agency in Saskatchewan,

I think possibly we have tried to plan and think too much for them in the past, and we should aim for the day when they can take their part in assuming the responsibilities and enjoying the privileges of citizenship of our great Dominion, not necessarily confined to reservations as at present.³⁶

Several others shared Bryant's concern that "the Indians have been relieved of many responsibilities, which perhaps has not been a kindness to him",³⁷ which suggests that at least some Indian Agents recognized that their actions were implicated in the disempowerment that Indian people experienced at the hands of the Branch.

Finally, there was a bundle of less frequently cited, but nevertheless interesting explanations of "the problem" that focused on the discrimination and racism that Indians had experienced at the hands of "white society", the dishonesty of previous Indian Agents, and the ethnocentrism of the Indian Affairs Branch. In relation to the issue of exploitation, J. Burk from Port Arthur, Ontario, suggested that

Another difficulty has been to secure sufficient commercial fishing licenses for our local Indians. The Indians cannot understand why the white man should be given much greater privileges than he. The country where the Indian roamed so

freely for generations is now over-run by commercial fishermen, (who are able to fly their fish to distant markets), and by logging and pulp-wood operators, miners and prospectors. These various developments have made serious inroads on the Indian Natural Rights [sic.]. In many cases, the Indian has been treated unfairly, and it is very difficult to keep him from being suspicious of, and distrusting, the white man.³⁸

H.E. Taylor of the Kamloops Agency attributed Indian peoples' lack of confidence in the Indian Affairs Branch, in part, to "the quite natural reaction of the Indian to his exploitation through past years, and to the arrogant superiority shown towards him by so many whites".³⁹

Four Indian Agents recognized that part of "the problem" was rooted in the legitimate reaction of Indians to the dishonest practices of previous Indian Agents, or the failure of those Agents to live up to past promises. R.S. Davis from Punnichy, Saskatchewan told the Minister that "...they still remember the treatment they received during the time the late Mr. Graham was Commissioner, and it is hard to overcome this. For instance: during the time Mr. Harding was Indian Agent at this Agency, the cattle of the Nut Lake Indians were sold, but I understand from the Indians a settlement was never made with them and they did not receive a cent from the sale of the cattle".⁴⁰ Indian Agent Matters from Chapleau, Ontario, blamed the lack of confidence on "promises being made without due consideration, and which were ultimately found to be impracticable."⁴¹ This was an indirect criticism of the high level of centralized decision making in the Branch, insofar as an Indian Agent could make a commitment to the Indians on the spot, but this commitment could be overruled at any time by senior branch officials.

Finally, three Indian Agents mentioned that the ethnocentrism of the Indian Affairs Branch towards Indian culture was part of the problem. One Indian Agent who was stationed on the British Columbia coast suggested to the Minister that the cultural insensitivity inherent in certain state policies was partially responsible for Indian peoples' mistrust and lack of confidence in the Branch. In particular he argued that past practices designed to eradicate the potlatch were not only inappropriate and unnecessary but also engendered a tremendous amount of hostility towards the Branch. F.J.C. Ball argued that part of the problem has been "the ignoring of Indian customs and traditions and the superimposing of a strictly cold legalistic implacable attitude on all Reserve matters." He went on to suggest that "the Indians, as all native races, have certain ways of doing things which appear haphazard to us, especially in dealings among themselves regarding property, land, etc., but it is surprising how well their unbusinesslike

methods work, where strictly legal methods cause confusion, resentment, and unrest".⁴²

Ball also recognized that state insensitivity to the human dignity of Indian people was also a major problem to overcome.

In the name of "efficiency" they were numbered, which hurt their pride and then we were instructed to refer to them by their "sumames" first. As about 75% have no real surnames, William Billy became Billy William and John Paul became Paul John, but there are many John Pauls and Paul Johns so it soon made confusion. These may appear to you to be trifling matters caused by inexperience, but I know it makes office work easier to have the Indians numbered, etc., but we are not here to be efficient office people only.⁴³

What is clear from the above discussion is that Indian Agents' perceptions of "the Indian problem" were complex. While nearly one-half of the explanations that Indian Agents had of the problem involved some form of blaming the victim, more than half of the explanations were relational in nature. These explanations did not necessarily involve placing the blame for Indian mistrust and dependence on Indian people themselves, but rather on the practices of the Indian Affairs branch and "White society's" dealings with Indians more generally. In other words, Indian Agents implicated themselves and the Department as part of the source of the so-called Indian problem.

Indian Agents' Proposed Solutions to "The Indian Problem"

What were the solutions proposed by Indian Agents to what they defined as "the problem"? First I examined solutions that focused on changing Indian people. Fifty-four of the one hundred and fourteen suggestions (47%) fell into this category. Second I examined solutions that focused on changing certain bureaucratic practices. Sixty responses (53%) fell into this latter category. These were what Dyck calls bureaucratic/technical solutions to the Indian problem. There were no proposed solutions that called for the actual dismantling of the Indian Affairs Branch, but this should be hardly surprising, for as Dyck suggests, few bureaucrats ever want to do themselves willingly out of work. Some of the proposed solutions did, however, indirectly criticize certain aspects of Indian administration in the past, and hence suggested that part of "the solution" should also be structural in nature.

Table 2: Indian Agent Suggestions for Improving Confidence of Indian People in the Indian Affairs Branch

Change Indian People		54
more education		19
sports/clubs		17
increased contact with 'Whites'		7
paying their own way		6
wage labour		5
Change the Bureacracy		60
improved Communication		17
within the Branch	5	
with Indian people	12	
more equipment/buildings		14
greater supervision		12
advisory boards/Band councils		12
more Indians working for Branch		5

Source: "Correspondence from various Indian Agents to the Honourable J. Allison Glen, Minister of Mines and Resources, offering suggestions for improvements on the reserves and in relations with the Indian Department, 1946". NAC, R.G. 10, vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.

As Table 2 indicates, there were six types of suggestions that focused on changing Indian peoples' subjectivity as a way to solve the problems of dependence and lack of trust. The most frequently cited solution to "the Indian problem" was for the government to provide more and better education to Indian children. In other words, "education" in the mid 1940s was seen in much the same way as it is today; as the great leveller of inequality between groups and the chief pathway to individual prosperity and happiness. More interesting, however, is that within this category were ten specific mentions of the potential utility of National Film Board documentaries as educative tools. Some Indian Agents suggested that because of limited literacy in some communities, the use of films and documentaries would provide a good medium to communication with Indians about "appropriate" methods of food preparation, household maintenance and personal hygiene. Others felt that "picture shows" would appeal more than reading, lectures, and talks by "experts" to Indian peoples' supposedly child-like nature, thus reflecting another sense of racialized inferiorization

consistent with blaming the victim ideology. According to J. Waite from Portage La Prairie, Manitoba,

The Indian loves a picture show and much good could be accomplished by the introduction of a lecturer and lantern slides furnished by the Extension service of the Province, on health, agriculture and relative subjects. The Indian appears to learn more readily from pictures than either by reading or talks.⁴⁴

The second most frequently cited solution that focused on Indian subjectivity was to promote sport among youth. Not untypical was Gifford Swartman's suggestion that "Athletic and other forms of recreation should also be encouraged—this should be stressed more in the Schools than it has been, in order that young people could carry the ideas back to their respective reserves,"⁴⁵ and J. Waite's argument that "pride of race... could be taught through supervised athletic contests".⁴⁶ Even though few Indian Agents elaborated in detail on the philosophical and sociological assumptions underlying the belief that sport would be a way of improving Indian administration, their suggestions seem to have been consistent with a much wider tradition of western thinking about the social significance of organized and competitive athletics. While not likely conceptualized in the same terms as that of Gruneau and Whitson (1993), Indian Agents were indirectly suggesting that the playing fields should be "potential sites for education and class conciliation—sites for the construction of a common culture that would reaffirm the civilizing value of the cultural accomplishments of the privileged classes". Thus, in addition to helping create healthier bodies and an *esprit de corps* among youth, sport was seen as a way to instill in Indian children that complex mix of values that constitutes part of the ethos of capitalist societies: competitive selection, promotion, hierarchy, social advancement, and the acceptance of defeat (Brohm, 1978).

There were six suggestions that focused on Indian people beginning to "pay more of their own way". Indian Agents suggested that the policy of "giving something for nothing,"⁴⁷ had bred dependence, and that one of the ways to resolve this was to have Indians make some sort of financial contribution to whatever improvements the Indian Agent was prepared to make for both individuals or for the collectivity.

Five Indian Agents saw the solution to "the Indian problem" in terms of the financial independence and improved self-esteem that would result from increased access to wage labour. Wage labour was identified as important for facilitating contact with White society and increasing the self-confidence of Indian people. In addition to improving the material standard of living of Indian people, wage labour would bring Indian workers into greater contact

with Whites, and would have the consequence for Indian workers of reinforcing the idea that "they are just as good men in many lines of work as their white brothers".⁴⁸ All of the Indian Agents who suggested that wage labour was part of the solution to the Indian problem commented on how conditions on their Reserves had improved during the war because of better access to wage labour.

The Indian Agents also acknowledged the important role that Indians played in production for the war effort. Faced with potentially disastrous shortages of labour during the war years, many employers in areas surrounding Reserves had to hire Indians out of necessity. Gifford Swartman, from Sioux Lookout, Ontario told the Minister that "we have been informed by three of the Mine Managers that it [the employment of Indians] meant the difference between keeping the Mines operating and closing them from a shortage of labour".⁴⁹ Both Swartman and J. Waite, of Portage La Prairie admitted that part of the problem that they faced with the end of the war was the expulsion of Indians from wage employment. According to Waite,

The war have [sic.] broadened the Indian outlook to some extent, in that he has taken the place of the whitemen in such pursuits as farm labouring, lumbering, etc. A large number of Indians have been employed in packing plants, refrigerators and labouring around cities and towns. *The latter work is now closed to them to some extent...* High wages improved their standard of living and I believe a real effort will be made to retain that improved standard.⁵⁰

While Indian Agents recognized that the expulsion of Indians from wage employment after the war was an obstacle to better administration, none seemed to be prepared to take-on employers and specifically identify their racist practices as part of "the problem".

The second general type of solution offered by Indian Agents was to propose certain technical improvements within the bureaucracy. The most frequently cited proposal of this type focused on improved communications both between Branch officials and between Indian Agents and Indians in their Agency. Five Indian Agents felt that more frequent contact between senior bureaucrats and field personnel was in order. Several, particularly those from British Columbia, suggested that the Department organize annual, or at least biennial, conferences of Indian Agents where they could meet collectively with senior officials to discuss policy and administrative matters. This was one of the suggestions that senior officials did act on; the following two decades saw numerous field staff conferences organized by the Branch where Agency Superintendents, as Indian Agents came to be known in 1947, were able to discuss a variety of local administrative

issues.⁵¹ The demand for these conferences further reflects the sense of isolation and alienation that Indian Agents felt from senior bureaucrats in Ottawa, who were seen as having no real field experience and little knowledge of the complexities of the job of Indian Agent.

Others admitted, though, that better communication with Indian people was more important than better communication with other Indian Agents and senior bureaucrats. Twelve Indian Agents noted that improved communication, and a willingness to share more information with Indians, was the best way to address the problems associated with Indian administration. According to Indian Agent Waite from Portage La Prairie, "in the past there was a tendency to keep Indians uninformed in regard to the working of the Department, this leads to misunderstandings and it has been the policy of this office, for some years, to keep the Indian informed in regard to his personal cash account..."⁵² The same strategy of "opening the books" was also suggested, by among others, F. Earl Anfield, from British Columbia: "It was interesting to note the reaction of the Bella Coola Indians when complete and detailed financial statements of all their logging and trust business were for the first time tabled at their annual meeting and posted on the Council notice boards. The immediate result was a fivefold... increase in financial transactions during the following year".⁵³ These suggestions for improvement were also interesting for what they implied about the nature of past administration within their respective Agencies, and within the Department more widely. Clearly, some Indian Agents were more prepared than others to at least try to keep people in the Agency informed of activities and decisions that had a direct bearing on their lives.

Encouragement for the establishment of advisory committees or strengthened Band Councils, and the creation of an associated infrastructure to sustain limited forms of collective decision making, were also seen as part of the solution by several Indian Agents. Indian Agents suggested that community halls or centers be built on Reserves so that more meetings could be held between various "boards" or "councils" and the Indian Agent. In regard to the composition of such boards or councils, however, nearly all of the Indian Agents who were in favour of "allowing" some form of collective decision making or consultation felt that much care needed to be taken when it came to selecting community representatives. J. Waite from Portage La Prairie, advanced the most fully reasoned case for Indian Agents to retain some control over those who were selected:

Advisory Boards are workable. [However] the Indians on the board would have to be carefully chosen; and I would suggest that the choice be made by the Indian Agent. The Indians chosen would have to have the confidence of the Indians also.

If the members of the board were chosen by the Indians, the non-progressive Indian, who is not afraid to ask for "hand outs" would be chosen. However, if the board was chosen by the agent, the Indians should soon fall in line behind a board that had their confidence.⁵⁴

Finally, several Indian Agents used the opportunity of being able to communicate directly with the Minister as a chance to make a pitch for more resources for the Agency, either in terms of more employees or more equipment and buildings. Thus, part of the solution to the problem was usually framed in terms of creating the human and technical infrastructure for more and better intervention into Indian communities. The Indian Agent for the Peigan Agency in southern Alberta submitted to the Minister a detailed account of the dilapidated condition of each Agency building arguing, among other things, that a new house for himself and his family would make him a much more effective administrator.⁵⁵ H.E. Taylor suggested that

Agency staffs should be sufficiently large to permit the giving of frequent talks...about agricultural and stock raising operations. Also, to permit the organizing of some form of illustration station on each reserve to be maintained with Indian cooperation. Such work, requiring as it does, daily encouragement and constant supervision, can only be attempted on widely scattered reserves, with adequate help.⁵⁶

Indian Agents were seemingly unaware of the irony associated with suggesting that one of the solutions to the problem of dependence was to have more employees of the Indian Affairs branch make more and better decisions for Indians in the Agency.

Finally, very few Indian Agents thought that the employment of more Indians within the bureaucracy would be an effective way to improve the confidence of Indian people in the Indian Affairs Branch. Perhaps concerned about protecting themselves from increased job competition, Indian Agents felt that while Indian people might be usefully employed in junior positions in the Branch, they were generally not ready to become full-fledged, power-wielding, Indian Agents. The employment of Indians as Indian Agents was usually discounted by the respondents in terms of their not being "ready" for the responsibility, and the potential problems that would arise when Indians held power over other Indians. N.J. McLeod from Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, who was perhaps the least enthused of all Indian Agents about hiring Indians as Indian Agents, argued that

the time has not yet arrived when employment of Indians in administration of their own affairs will meet with the approval

of the Indians and will cause jealousy and incompetence in the administration of their affairs.⁵⁷

This kind of attitude reflected a fairly typical reservation that colonial officials in a variety of contexts have had about self-rule, or self-government; a nice idea but the colonized are just not ready for taking on such important duties.

Conclusion

A good case can certainly be made that the bureaucratic system within which Indian Agents worked was characterized by institutional racism. After all, two of the central premises of the *Indian Act* and of the Indian Affairs Branch of the federal government were that Indian people were incapable of managing their own affairs and that Indian people required the protection of the government. However, the important sociological question that this research raises is whether those who occupy positions within a racist structure *necessarily* and always incorporate that racism into their own definition of the situation.

If Dyck's understanding of the social attitudes of Indian Agents is correct, then one would expect that the vast majority of the interpretations of the Indian problem offered by Indian Agents would involve blaming the victim, and that bureaucratic/technical proposals would be advanced as a way of solving "the problem". As this paper indicates, there is certainly some support for Dyck's characterization of the subjectivity of Indian Agents as agents of coercive tutelage. Just under one-half of their interpretations of the so-called "Indian problem" focused on Indian people as the source of their own problems, either in terms of their racial or cultural inferiority, or in terms of their willingness to listen to agitators who did not have their best interests in mind. Furthermore, many of the solutions that they proposed entailed either minor tinkering with the bureaucratic structure within which they, and their Indian charges, were enmeshed, or changing the subjectivity of Indians in order to make them more governable.

However, this paper also suggests that the attitudes of Indian Agents towards Indian people, their work, and the branch of the federal government they worked for, were somewhat more complex than what is suggested by Dyck. While some Indian Agents certainly did articulate racist and paternalistic attitudes towards Indian people, and offered relatively simple solutions to what they saw as "the Indian problem", others offered fairly sophisticated (can we say proto-sociological?) analyses of the nature and scope of the problem. Indian Agents did not simply articulate institutional definitions of the so-called "Indian problem". Indeed, the majority of explanations of the Indian problem that Indian Agents offered were relational in nature wherein

the problem was conceptualized in terms of the historically constituted social relationships between Indians and White society.

One of the things that is truly striking about some of the assessments and proposals that Indian Agents offered was their relative modernity. It has now become commonplace, for example, to identify the negative consequences, for both individuals and communities, of the residential school system. Menno Boldt (1993), in his hard hitting assessment of the challenges that Indian people face in relation to self-government, has made a convincing case for taxation and increased wage labour as the solution to the problem of Indian dependence on the state. Many have called on the federal government to live up to its unfilled treaty obligations and the original spirit of the treaties. Most policy makers, Indian leaders and academic commentators continue to place high hopes on the education system as the panacea for the solution to a variety of community and individual level problems (Ross, 1991). In other words, several of the assessments and proposals for change that Indian Agents offered over fifty years ago have now become part of the battery of solutions that many correct-thinking analysts have proposed for the so-called Indian problem.

But there were also inconsistencies. Even though over half of the Indian Agents suggested that the source of the Indian problem was in the quality of social relationships that Indian people had with White society and the Department of Indian Affairs, few Indian Agents were able to translate this assessment into more radical solutions. Ironically, even though many recognized the nature of social relations as the problem, few were able to suggest solutions that went beyond changing the subjectivity of Indian people and/or minor tinkering with the bureaucratic structure to make it more efficient.

What then do we make of the Indian Agents' definition of the so-called "Indian problem"? First, care needs to be taken in the analysis of the interrelationship between institutional and personal level racism. Individuals working within a racist structure may not necessarily articulate and accept the racist premises upon which the structure is built. Even agents of tutelage, whose social positions are directly dependent upon certain racist attitudes and beliefs, may resist the organization's pressures to define the situation in certain racist ways. Second, perhaps a more dialectical view of the state in general, and of the Indian Affairs Branch and its relationship with Indian people, is in order. While one of the latent functions of the Indian Affairs Branch has certainly been to act as an agent of social control over Indian people, it is also the case that one of the features of specific branches of the state is to represent the interests of respective client groups at the Cabinet table and in society more generally. Thus, while the social control aspects of the Indian Affairs Branch have been widely recognized, the

representation aspects of the duties of Indian Agents require more attention. The findings of this paper should caution against easy generalizations about these key colonial officials, and will hopefully provoke further research into the subjectivity of the powerful.

Notes

1. This research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I would like to thank Linda Mahood and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on this paper.
2. Letter to all Indian Agents in Canada from J. Allison Glen, Minister of Mines and Resources, January 7, 1946, National Archives of Canada (NAC), R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
3. It is not clear whether the letter was written by Glen, or whether it was in fact written by R.A. Hoey, the Director of the Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources.
4. During the previous decade, Indian organizations were starting to more systematically challenge the dominance of the Indian Affairs Branch. According to the Minister's letter "the fact that we have today a number of Indian Rights Associations in existence and that representatives of these organizations have visited Ottawa on a number of occasions during the last year is, in itself, evidence of the interest of Indians in their own advancement..." He also recognized that the days of individual resistance to state policies and initiatives were giving way to more organized collective resistance on the part of Indian people. "It is unthinkable to me that in an age of organized effort and collective action that the Indian would seek to remedy his ills by individual action. Indian Associations, therefore, in my judgment, are not only here to stay but are likely to multiply during the period immediately ahead of us...". See also Miller, 1989:221.
5. Letter to Indian Agents, J. Allison Glen, Minister of Mines and Resources, January 7, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
6. The Minister actually asked NAC for comment on three questions. The third dealt with the role that provincial extension services should play in the delivery of certain services to Indian communities. Every Indian Agent who responded felt that it was a good idea to make more use of provincial extension services.
7. M.W. McCracken, Indian Agent at Samia, Ontario, simply responded to the Minister that the "policies outlined in...your letter would certainly be in the best interests of our Indian population at Samia and I shall take every opportunity to put them into effect" (Letter to the Minister from M.W. McCracken, Indian Agent, Samia, Ontario, March 8, 1946, #33). In one other case, an Acting Indian Agent saw this as an

opportunity to make a pitch for a permanent appointment directly to the Minister. In this case, the Acting Indian Agent highlighted the important improvements that he had made in a very short time at the Kootenay Indian Agency (Letter to the Minister from J.M. Barre, Acting Indian Agent, Kootenay Agency, January 23, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8).

8. Letter to the Minister from M.S. Todd, Indian Agent, Alert Bay, British Columbia, February 9, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
9. Letter to the Minister from F.J.C. Ball, Indian Agent, Vancouver, British Columbia, January 30, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
10. The Minister's concern about a lack of confidence on the part of Indian people in the mission of the Indian Affairs Branch was shared by almost all of the Indian Agents who responded to his request of input. Perhaps not surprisingly, most Indian Agents regarded the existence of a lack of confidence as a problem that other Indian Agents had, and not one that necessarily characterized their Agency.
11. Letter to the Minister from H.E. Taylor, Indian Agent, Kamloops, British Columbia, February 1, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
12. Letter to the Minister from F. Earl Anfield, Indian Agent, Bella Coola, British Columbia, January 30, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
13. Taylor, 1946.
14. Letter to the Minister from H. Lariviere, Indian Agent, Abitibi, Quebec, January 19, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
15. Letter to the Minister from J.A. Marleau, Indian Agent, Sturgeon Falls, Ontario, January 26, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
16. Letter to the Minister from G.E. Hurl, Indian Agent, Christian Island, Ontario, January 24, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
17. Letter to the Minister from W. Young, Indian Agent, Griswold Agency, Manitoba, February 6, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
18. Letter to the Minister from Robert Lamothe, Indian Agent, Notre Dame du Nord, Quebec, January 21, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
19. See for example, letter to the Minister from George Down, Indian Agent, Caradoc, Ontario, January 18, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
20. Ball, 1946.
21. Letter to the Minister from R. Howe, Indian Agent, Vanderhoof, British Columbia, February 4, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.

22. Letter to the Minister from H.E. Taylor, Indian Agent, Kamloops, British Columbia, February 1, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
23. Letter to the Minister from Samuel Devlin, Indian Agent at Parry Sound, Ontario, January 22, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
24. Letter to the Minister from N.J. McLeod, Indian Agent, Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, January 20, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
25. The CCF's solution to the problem, however, involved the termination of the special status of Indians, a solution which predated the federal government's White Paper of 1969 by several decades. See Pitsula, 1994:21-52.
26. Letter to the Minister from J.G. Burk, Indian Agent, Port Arthur, Ontario, March 23, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
27. Letter to the Minister from J. Gillett, Indian Agent, Prince Rupert, British Columbia, February 26, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
28. Letter to the Minister from A.G. Smith, Indian Agent, Birtle, Manitoba, January 23, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
29. Anfield, 1946.
30. Letter to the Minister from R. Howe, Indian Agent, Vanderhoof, British Columbia, February 4, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Letter to the Minister from Gifford Swartman, Indian Agent, Sioux Lookout, Ontario, January 23, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
33. Letter to the Minister from P.G. Lazenby, Indian Agent, Fisher River Agency, Manitoba, January 21, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
34. Devlin, 1946.
35. Letter to the Minister from J.G. Burk, Indian Agent, Port Arthur, March 23, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
36. Letter to the Minister from J.L. Bryant, Indian Agent, Kamsack, Saskatchewan, January 26, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
37. Letter to the Minister from S.H. Simpson, Indian Agent, Files Hills Agency, Saskatchewan, January 19, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
38. Burk, 1946.
39. Taylor, 1946.

40. Letter to the Minister from R.S. Davis, Indian Agent, Punnichy, Saskatchewan, February 4, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
41. Letter to the Minister from F. Matters, Indian Agent, Chapleau, Ontario, January 15, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
42. Ball, 1946.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Letter to the Minister from J. Waite, Indian Agent, Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, January 29, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
45. Swartman, 1946.
46. Waite, 1946.
47. Davis, 1946.
48. Letter to the Minister from J.L. Bryant, Indian Agent, Kamsack, Saskatchewan, January 26, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
49. Swartman, 1946.
50. Waite, 1946, emphasis mine.
51. See for example, "Report of Proceedings of Conference", Vancouver, British Columbia, August 21-23, 1946. Indian Affairs Branch. R.G. 10, Vol. 8571, file 901/1-2-2-5.
52. Waite, 1946.
53. Anfield, 1946.
54. Waite, 1946.
55. Letter to the Minister from Indian Agent, Peigan Agency, February 3, 1946, NAC, R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-2-8.
56. Taylor, 1946.
57. McLeod, 1946.

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