

—Photo by D. S. MacLean
Calgary's Dr. John Laurie,
costumed as **Chief White**
Cloud of the Stony tribe

*Let's not force
the Indian from
the reserves, an
authority pleads*

Laurie's fight for
his friends
behind the



Buckskin curtain



By IRIS NAISH

NOT LONG AGO, there was a great to-do in Alberta about an Indian family that had fallen into grim poverty after leaving the reserve. The family had accepted the Indian Affairs Branch's offer of an advance on its treaty money in return for enfranchisement.

The money didn't last long. The man, with his pregnant wife and seven illiterate children, ended up in a canvas tent, cold, hungry and penni-

less. They couldn't return to the security of the reserve. Under the terms of the Indian Act, they were no longer Indians

There was a great deal of publicity surrounding the case. One newspaper referred sympathetically to the family's "falling for what has been described as the federal government bribe." Help poured in from all sides. But people who have worked for years on behalf of the treaty Indians were frankly worried. "Charity isn't the solution,"

said one. "People will soon get fed up when other enfranchised Indians end up the same way. There'll be hundreds of cases like this one unless the Indian Act is changed. You've only got to look at police court dockets and consult welfare agencies to know how these Indians are doing outside the buckskin curtain."

Some insist that a racial problem—even a Little Rock situation—could result from the government's attempt to integrate the Canadian In-

dian. And Dr. John Laurie, a 57-year-old retired Calgary school teacher, will go along with that view. He has been helping the Indians of Alberta most of his life. What people don't seem to understand, says Laurie, is that the Indian problem in Alberta is different from that of, say, Ontario, where Indians have been exposed to white man's civilization almost three centuries longer.

"Our Alberta Indians are two or three generations behind," he says, "we must

catch up these lost generations before we can have integration."

He notes that the Indian tribes of Alberta were warring with one another as recently as the 1870's. Yet, on June 20, representatives of all the tribes will sit together to discuss their problems peaceably. They have been doing this annually since 1944, when the Indian Association of Alberta was formed, with Laurie as secretary.

Once again they'll send resolutions to Ottawa. Again they'll urge revision of the Indian Act—the removal, for

Miss Naish, a former reporter of The Globe and Mail, now lives in Calgary.

THE BUCKSKIN CURTAIN

... this year, more hope

instance, of clauses such as this:

The Minister may appoint a committee to inquire into and report upon the desirability of enfranchising within the meaning of this Act an Indian or band, whether or not the Indian or the band has applied for enfranchisement.

It's that "whether or not" that frightens the Indian.

This year, the Indians of Alberta have a little more hope. They feel that Prime Minister Diefenbaker has shown his awareness of the problem by appointing one of the number, James Gladstone, to the Senate. But they're still cautious. They're suspicious of the white man. When Laurie first went among them years ago, they couldn't believe he wanted to help them without getting something in return.

An elderly Sarcee was skeptical when the Indians became eligible for social benefits, such as old-age pensions. Beware, he warned his people. During his lifetime, he said, the government had never given the Indian anything without exacting a high price.

IN LAURIE, the Indians have a true friend; he's a man who has sacrificed his health and given freely of his time (he's a bachelor) in helping them. This well-educated Scot with the rich but tired voice has never accepted a penny for his work, though honors have been heaped upon him. Last year, for example, the University of Alberta conferred

the degree of Doctor of Laws upon him. He is an honorary chief of two tribes and a blood brother—the highest attainment—of one. He retired from teaching because of his health. During the summer he lives on the Morley reserve, near Calgary, where he's engaged in writing a dictionary of the Stony language.

"The Indians worship him," an admirer remarked, "he's an Albert Schweitzer to them."

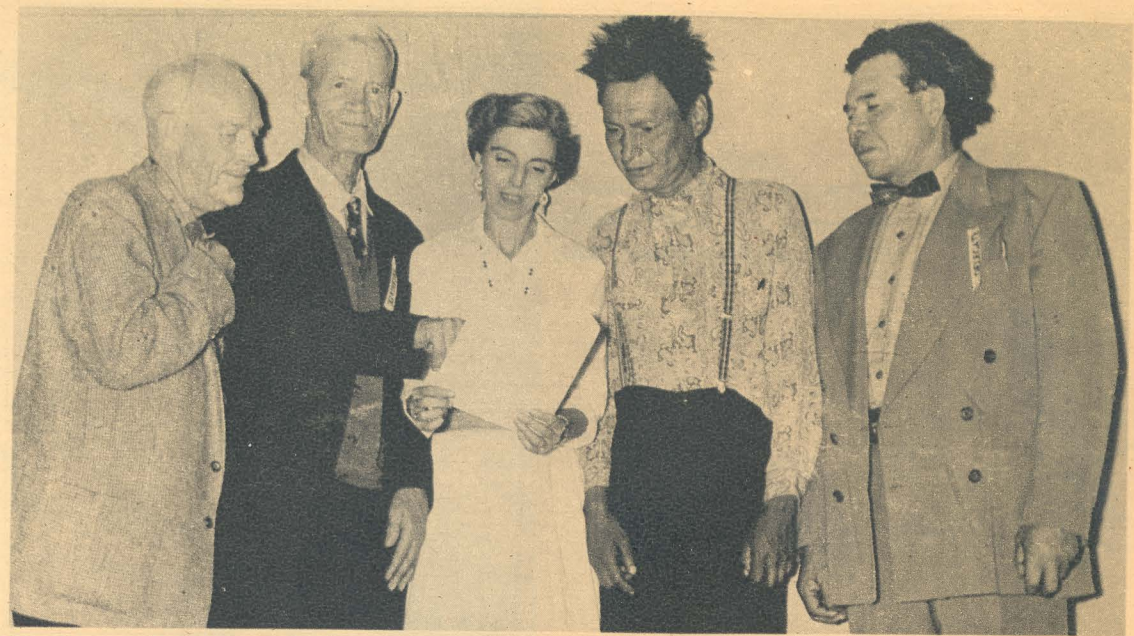
Laurie assisted many young Indians financially and educationally while he struggled along on a teacher's salary.

Two years ago, he handed over the Indian Association's secretaryship to two Indians. He's proud of this—he's a great believer in the Indian's managing his own affairs.

LAURIE will give credit to the federal government for many improvements in educational and health facilities on the reserves — although he says the schools are still inadequate and there is only one welfare worker to cover the whole province. But as long as he isn't totally incapacitated, he will fight for changes in the Indian Act, which was revised by the Liberal government in 1951.

"I'm certain in my own mind," he says, "that by changing the definition of Indians as they did, the government was determined to remove the Indians from the reserves."

He insists that Alberta Indians aren't ready for integration. They must get a better education and be



The brass of the Indian Association of Alberta: Laurie, Senator James Gladstone, past president; Ruth Gorman; recording secretary Ed Hunter and president Albert Lightning

taught trades if they're to take their place among the white people—or non-Indians, as he prefers to call them. He admits that some Indians have done well off the reserve. But most of them have not, and many end up in police court.

"Some of the enfranchised Indians around here are dirty and shiftless and don't expect to pay for anything," said a Calgary lawyer. "They come to us, expecting us to take their drunken cases, and we daren't turn them down because we'd have Ruth Gorman on our necks."

HE WAS REFERRING in a grudgingly admiring way to Mrs. John Gorman, a 43-year-old Calgary lawyer who packs an incredible amount of personality and dynamite into a slim 90 pounds. She is the daughter of the late M. B. Peacock, a King's Counsel who defended the Indians in court and won their case when their hunting rights were challenged. That was in 1935. Years later, his

daughter acted for the Indians in the celebrated Hobbema case—a case discussed all over the world. It was debated in the House of Commons in Ottawa. It was commented upon in Europe.

It took three hearings and five years before the Supreme Court of Alberta, in 1957, gave the 122 Indians, whose ancestors were said to have taken scrip, the right to remain on the land of—and share in the profits from—their oil-rich reserve at Hobbema. Scrip was a land or money grant given as a settlement allowance to wandering halfbreeds after the Riel Rebellion.

"Imagine," Mrs. Gorman comments, "what would have happened if those Indians from Hobbema had been turned loose in the world with little education and no trade or money. This situation is serious. Remember, there are 15,000 Indians in Alberta and the number is increasing rapidly. We're going to have a serious integration problem if the gov-

ernment continues to encourage Indians to leave the reserves by tempting them with an advance on their treaty money."

MR.S. GORMAN doesn't practice privately. Her main job, she says, is to keep house for her husband, also a lawyer, and 16-year-old daughter. But she is the unpaid solicitor for the Indian Association and has been fighting its battles for years. She is a princess of the Stonies and is Queen, or Mother, of the Crees. The older Indians (they have what she calls a delicious sense of humor) address her as Mom. Some try to ignore the fact that she is a woman and refer to her as "our brother."

She carries her fight on behalf of the Indians to the doorstep of prime ministers and cabinet ministers. She is so tiny and young-looking that, at first, political leaders are inclined to pat her on the head and send her away

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Delegates to last year's convention of the association, held on the reserve at Hobbema



Mrs. Dave Crowchild, a Sarcee, and Mrs. Sam Currie, a Cree

THE PINKSKIN CURTAIN

... the vote? no interest

They have learned to respect her power and wisdom.

Both Mrs. Gorman and John Laurie, who is now treasurer, plan to attend the coming parley of the Indian Association at the Stony Reserve at Morley. The sessions will be held in the community hall, opened in April.

INDIANS from all parts of the province will gather in Morley. Some of the 200 delegates will travel 500 miles. They are given little expense money by the bands they represent, but they'll make the journey somehow. The association, they say, has united the Indians of Alberta, and through it they hope to improve their lot.

The sessions are usually slowed by the need for interpretation—the Indians speak many languages and dialects. The sessions are conducted in English whenever possible, but sometimes an Indian has difficulty expressing himself in English. Thus the Cree, for example, speaks in his own tongue, and it's translated into English and then into other Indian languages:

Laurie will advance his idea for the establishment by the federal government of a

commission of experts to take inventory of all the reserves, because, he says, they all have different problems. The ability of bands to produce from their land should be studied, and the economy of every reserve adjusted.

"I'd like to see the Indians develop a system of self-government within the reserve," he says. And he is, at the same time, in favor of integration of the Indian—"very much so, if it comes from within. It must be only with the Indians' approval, and they know they're not ready for it yet. You can see for yourself how futile it is to integrate people whose average education is Grade III and who have neither the skill nor the money to establish themselves in a non-Indian world."

VOCATIONAL teaching should be expanded, Laurie believes. He wants the Indian to receive a technical training that will make him a good worker—on or off the reserve.

"Perhaps most Indians will never want to become integrated. They may wish to remain within the security of the reserve. That's their



Delegates vote on a motion; their main demand is for some guarantee of treaty status

right. Under the 1870 treaty between the Indians and the Crown—and I'd like to emphasize that the treaty was with the Crown and not with the federal government—the Indians agreed to surrender all claim to the lands they had occupied, with the proviso that reserves should be set apart for them where no non-Indian could trespass."

For this, every treaty Indian was to get \$5 a year. (It's a 20-year advance of this money that the Indian Affairs

Branch now offers the Indian in return for the franchise.) Education was to be promoted, and the Indians were given hunting rights on all wild Crown lands.

THERE ARE three clauses Laurie would like to see added to the Indian Act. They are:

- In any section of the Indian Act, where the minister's discretion or that of the governor-general-in-council is

exercised in any manner that an Indian or a band of Indians considers inequitable, there shall be an appeal from that decision to a judge of the Supreme Court of the province where the Indian or band of Indians is settled.

- That all Indians who, at the time of the coming into force of the revised Indian Act of 1951, were either treaty Indians or descendants of treaty Indians, be henceforth regarded as treaty Indians and that no such person be bribed, coerced or

A GRAND DAME TAKES A BATH

TORONTO'S grand dame has almost finished her spectacular bath, standing unperturbed while curious thousands watch. It has been a bath of almost four months, and a fairly expensive one, costing close to \$200,000. No one has been embarrassed by the public display. If eyes were closed at all, it was to escape the accumulated grime of 27 years that was scraped from the lady—the 34-story Canadian Bank of Commerce on Toronto's King Street West.

The Commonwealth's tallest building stands light grey among her downtown neighbors, most of them blackened by tons of soot.

The application of mechanized elbow grease was effected by some of the best steeplejacks in the business. They peered down from the top—500 feet—during wintry February windlashings, then sandblasted their way toward the sidewalk below.

A nine-mile web of three-quarter-inch cable was strung from the tower downward, safely securing the 20 scaffolds which are the steeplejacks' offices. On the way down,

By **RODERICK GOODMAN**



these men of cold nerves and steady feet reconditioned 77 miles of mortar joints. The bath required 2,000,000 gallons of water.

As the task progressed, more men were put on the job. First there were 40 and then a total of 72 in on the finish. The weather was kind,

the bank co-operated, and the police helped by patrolling the sidewalks and blocking pedestrian traffic when required.

A valuable man was lost during the last stages of the project. but it was sickness, not the hazards of his craft, that took the life of the project's 59-year-old general superintendent. From his bedside telephone, William Caklos directed operations until a relapse claimed his life.

What kind of protection has a steeplejack? New safety standards have lowered insurance premiums to compare favorably with those of racing drivers, pilots and firemen. For the Bank of Commerce project, only new ropes and new platforms were used. "We don't allow any spliced rope on this job," said Mr. Shaw. The company spent \$8,000 for new equipment before setting to work.

Was it worth it? Well, the grand dame hasn't looked so pretty since her debut in 1931. ●

Mr. Goodman reports real estate news for The Weekly Globe and Mail.

by any authority.

●That the federal government undertake a comprehensive plan of trades and professional training to equip young Indians for any type of employment within or outside the reserves.

WHEN he was asked recently whether the Alberta tribes—at one another's throats in the last century—were really good friends now, Laurie hesitated. Then he smiled. "Yes—with reservation. But I suppose that every tribe still thinks it's superior to the others. The Indian is very much interested in his own reserve—and to a much smaller degree in other reserves. He isn't interested in getting a vote. And world affairs have no meaning for him." ●

And then, in reference to figures that show that a very high percentage of eligible Indians left the reserves to fight during the Second World War, he said:

"It was a challenge. No Indian will ignore a challenge. That's why I think the Indians, if treated as they should be, can meet the challenge of integration." ●