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7AM-INDIANS±; 0388

7RGNL-TTS±

HOBBEHA; ALTA. (CP) - LEGISLATION AIMED AT REMOVING DISCRIMINATION FROM THE INDIAN ACT WOULD BE A STEP FORWARD IN THE QUEST FOR INDIAN SELF-GOVERNMENT; THE CHAIRMAN OF A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON NATIVE AFFAIRS SAID FRIDAY.

STAN SCHELLENBERGER, CONSERVATIVE MP FOR WETASKIWIN, WAS SPEAKING AT A MEETING ON THE HOBBEHA RESERVE ATTENDED BY MEMBERS OF FOUR AREA INDIAN BANDS: MONTANA; LOUIS BULL; ERMINESKIN AND SAMSON.

'MANY AMENDMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE INDIAN ACT; BUT NONE HAVE GIVEN INDIAN PEOPLE CONTROL;' HE TOLD ABOUT 150 PEOPLE GATHERED AT THE MONTANA ADMINISTRATION BUILDING. 'I HOPE THIS IS THE LAST TIME THE ACT IS AMENDED. IT'S TIME TO REPEAL THE ACT AND TURN GOVERNMENT OVER TO THE PEOPLE.'

THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS; TO BE ENACTED BEFORE THE EQUALITY PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION'S CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS TAKE EFFECT APRIL 17; WOULD RESTORE INDIAN STATUS TO ABOUT 22,000 PEOPLE; MAINLY WOMEN WHO MARRIED NON-INDIAN MEN.

AT A MEETING THURSDAY; 30 OF ALBERTA'S 42 INDIAN CHIEFS REJECTED THE BILL.

CHANGES CAN BE MADE TO THE LEGISLATION BEFORE IT IS PRESENTED IN ITS FINAL FORM; SCHELLENBERGER SAID.

BUT THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE NOT SATISFIED; SAYING THE FOUR RELATIVELY WEALTHY HOBBEHA BANDS STAND TO LOSE MUCH.

7WARNS OF FRAUD±

'WE FEAR A SUBSTANTIAL DEPLETION OF OUR ASSETS THROUGH WOMEN AND CHILDREN BEING RE-INSTATED;' SAID MARVIN LITTLECHILD; ACTING CHIEF OF THE ERMINESKIN BAND. 'IN OTHER CASES IT WILL BE POSSIBLE FOR NON-INDIAN WOMEN TO MARRY INTO OUR BAND JUST TO COLLECT A PAYOUT.'

BANDS WOULD ALSO FACE INCREASED COSTS IN SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING; LITTLECHILD SAID.

RESERVE WOMEN ATTENDING THE MEETING OPPOSED THE LEGISLATION.

'WOMEN HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN THE IMPLICATIONS OF MARRYING OFF THE RESERVE AND THEY DO SO BY CHOICE;' SAID THERESA BULL; A COUNCIL MEMBER FROM THE LOUIS BULL BAND. 'ALL THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE WORRIED ABOUT IS THESE WOMEN WHO HAD LOST THEIR STATUS. WHAT ABOUT THE CURRENT BAND

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SCHELLENBERGER; WHO ESTIMATED ONLY 10 TO 20 PER CENT OF THOSE ELIGIBLE WOULD DECIDE TO RETURN TO THEIR RESERVES; PROMISED BAND LEADERS WOULD BE GIVEN TIME TO PRESENT THEIR CASE TO HIS COMMITTEE DURING THE NEXT TWO WEEKS.

IF THE BILL IS MADE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH; HE SAID; SOME CONCERNS COULD BE ADDRESSED EVEN AFTER THE LEGISLATION IS PASSED.