

Read the following two quotations in preparation for your speech protesting the 1969 white paper.

"We do not want the Indian Act retained because it is a good piece of legislation. It isn't. It is discriminatory from start to finish. But it is a lever in our hands and an embarrassment to the government, as it should be. No just society and no society with even pretensions to being just can long tolerate such a piece of legislation, but we would rather continue to live in bondage under the inequitable Indian Act than surrender our sacred rights. Any time the government wants to honour its obligations to us we are more than ready to help devise new Indian legislation."

Cardinal, Harold. *The Unjust Society, The Tragedy of Canada's Indians*, M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1969, p. 140.

"In 1969, the recently elected federal government — like many other Canadians at the time — wished to eliminate the barriers that were seen increasingly as preventing Indian people from participating fully in Canada's prosperity. The government issued a white paper on Indian policy that, if implemented, would have seen the global elimination of all Indian special status, the gradual phasing out of federal responsibility for Indians and protection of reserve lands, the repeal of the *Indian Act*, and the ending of treaties. The government watchword was equality, its apparent goal "the full, free and non-discriminatory participation of the Indian people in Canadian society" on the basis "that the Indian people's role of dependence be replaced by a role of equal status". Surprised by the massive and fervent opposition to this measure, the government was forced to withdraw its proposal in 1970. The *Indian Act*, largely unchanged, is still with us.

“Nonetheless, most still agree that progress in self-government, in economic development and in eradicating the social ills afflicting many Indian communities cannot be accomplished within the confines of the *Indian Act*. Despite being its harshest critics, however, Indian people are often extremely reluctant to see it repealed or even amended. Many refer to the rights and protections it contains as being almost sacred, even though they are accompanied by other paternalistic and constraining provisions that prevent Indian peoples assuming control of their own fortunes. This is the first and most important paradox that needs to be understood if the partnership between First Nations and other Canadians is to be renewed.”

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
Volume 1 - Looking Forward Looking Back
PART TWO - False Assumptions and a Failed Relationship
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1. The Paradox of *INDIAN ACT* Reform
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http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211051151/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sg22_e.html