

Adjournment Debate

January 20. That letter said that the Churchill constituency was in a category of 20 per cent unemployment? I will accept the figure of 20 per cent as representing the unemployment in the area. However, the next communication that I received from the minister's office stated that allocations had been made for each particular constituency, and that in the Churchill constituency the allocations were made in the following way: Indians, \$843,000; regulars, \$100,000. What this indicated to me was that the Indian population, who are the responsibility of the federal government—that was referred to by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration—were allocated a certain amount of money, but the figure on their unemployment was inaccurate. Unemployment among the Indians runs closer to 75 per cent.

● (2210)

The minister has asked each member of parliament to appoint a ministerial advisory board to look at the projects that have been submitted from the communities. Those boards are made up of people from the constituency and they are the ones who advise on which projects should be funded. I sometimes think that the person who designed the Canada Works program has never been out of Ottawa because he could not have known what he was doing in allocating separate funds to Indian people living on the reserve, and separate funds to regulars, which means anyone not living on the reserve, eliminated about 2,700 status Indians living in the constituency. What this did was to drive a wedge down the middle of the communities in the north.

Many of our communities are composed of status Indians, non-status Indians, and Metis people. There is a line dividing the reserve people from the others. These communities have been working in harmony over the years. They are trying their best to work together as one community. What this program is doing is to drive the wedge much deeper. I hope that when the next allocations are made on August 26 we will not run into the same problem.

The people who have been named to the ministerial advisory board are responsible constituents in the Churchill riding. One is the vice-president of the Manitoba Indian Association and another is the vice-president of the Metis Federation. They know how money should be allocated in that area, unlike the official here who decides how to allocate this money before it gets to the ministerial advisory board. I refuse to accept his criteria.

The other criticism I have of this program is that it gives little chance to people to participate in it. Perhaps that was the design of the program in the hope that application forms would not reach some of the remote areas. I have here a note from a community which reads:

Dear Sir:

Please excuse the lateness of this application. Mail is slow in this isolated community and the forms were received only three days ago.

This was dated on the day of the deadline. We fought hard to get the deadline on February 4 extended so that communities which were really in need of work would have the opportunity to get in their applications. I have received other letters

indicating that some communities have never received application forms. We do not receive daily newspapers in our area, nor do we have radio and television to carry the news of the existence of projects such as this one.

In the speech I made the other day I made reference to the other programs in existence at present. First we had LIP with \$2,400,000. Next we had FLIP with \$1,088,000. Then we had LEAP. We also have the Canada Works program, and the Canada Manitoba Northlands program. These were dumped, so to speak, on those communities within a period of about six months. The leaders of those communities were not even given the opportunity to sit down, assess those programs, and take the best advantage of them. The result was that many applications were made hurriedly in the hope they would be approved. I suggest that there will be ramifications and problems, because the communities were pressured into making those applications.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Arthur Portelance (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, we paid a special allocation to Indians living on reservations and on Crown lands for two reasons. First, it should be made clear that they are not included in the labour force survey carried out by Statistics Canada, and they are unlikely to be receiving unemployment insurance benefits. So we make them a separate group to be sure that they are included in the basic allocation. Second, the federal government must naturally give special attention to status Indians. On the other hand, we do not give a special allocation to Metis and status Indians living off reservations because they are included in the labour force survey on the same basis as all Canadians, with the exception of Indians living on reservations.

However, departmental advisory committees are urged when they decide the amount to be paid to non-status Indians to continue to examine carefully the projects submitted by Metis and status Indians living off reservations. In addition, should an insufficient number of acceptable applications be received from Indians living on reservations and Crown lands the unused funds would then be added to the regular fund and Metis just like Indians would be the first to be able to benefit from it.

To be more specific, Mr. Speaker, as far as the riding of Churchill is concerned, the rate of surplus manpower in this case is 6.17 per cent, excluding status Indians living on reservations or Crown lands, which would normally entitle them to an allocation of \$100,000. But because of the size of the population and the high rate of unemployment registered among status Indians living on reservations or Crown lands in that riding the special allocation in their case was \$843,000.

Those arrangements, Mr. Speaker, allow me to suggest that status Indians living in remote areas receive a fair share of the funds allotted under the Canada Works Program.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at eleven o'clock a.m.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.21 p.m.