

Indian Affairs

what the situation is and have access to this document. These people should be informed what the government is doing to protect and preserve their rights down to the last iota.

The document refers to the establishment of a local government bureau which is supposed to act as the co-ordinating agent of various regions, hold discussion meetings and smooth the path through the Ottawa headquarters. This is an embarrassing phrase to the public servants in the Indian Affairs Branch. The document refers to smoothing the path through the Ottawa headquarters.

Mr. Peters: It is a two-headed thing.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): My colleague suggests it is two-headed. I have already said today, although not in the house, that there is a tribal war going on in this department between the minister and the real minister, as he has been called on some occasions, the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Andras). This is one of the few departments that has two heads and no direction. These two heads have been fighting with each other for favours from the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and about which one is really the head of the department.

In any event, this document was prepared within the branch and refers to the necessity of smoothing the path through Ottawa headquarters. We all know that the Indian Affairs Branch has been in the business of producing red tape for so long it has enough red tape for all the government departments and lots left over to confound and confuse itself as to what it is doing, but to have it written clearly in a document prepared by the department that there is a need to smooth the path through Ottawa headquarters is probably one of the reasons the document has not been made public in any formal way.

The people who conceived this idea felt that the local government bureau should be based in Ottawa. This is just more centralization and another example of the ivory tower attitude. These people feel they should not get into the field or talk to these native people about what they are doing or what they want. These officials want to maintain themselves insulated here in Ottawa with all the rest of the useless bureaucrats who exist in the Indian affairs department. They want to set up another structure to deal with this idea imposed upon the native people. That is why this document has not been published.

The document goes on to say that regardless of any desire to permit the Indian people

[Mr. Howard (Skeena).]

a free hand in running their reserves on a local basis the department cannot in all practicality divorce itself entirely because undoubtedly these people will require some guidance and control. Those sound to me like the words of bureaucrats. This is the type of thing the minister does not want the people to know. He does not want them to know the department is thinking in terms of authoritarianism and control.

That is not the only place in the document where the word "control" is used. It appears throughout the course of the document, and is used in reference to the necessity to control the affairs of native Indian people. This is the old paternalistic attitude which has plagued the Indian people of this nation for the last hundred years. It is the attitude of the government that the native Indian people are not competent to run their own affairs and that somebody in Ottawa has to do so for them.

There are a number of references in this document to controlling these people. For instance, it suggests that it is incumbent upon the department to control their affairs and that within reason it is necessary to establish control agencies. This type of reference continues for page after page. This is the real reason the document has not been published.

The minister has not told us this, but I know from speaking with him that he exudes sincerity. I know this from the manner in which he speaks, the nice phrases he uses and the intensity with which he approaches Indian affairs. I am sure he would like to make this document public. I am sure he would like to say yes, Mr. Speaker, let us make it public because it deals with Indian affairs and with something fundamental, namely, a people who desire to run their own affairs.

The minister is engaged in consultation and conference with Indian people all across this nation. He has told them to come and tell him what they want to do about their own affairs. The question which begs an answer is, why does he not make this document public?

Mr. Chrétien: Because it is not my policy.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): I notice the minister making copious notes of what I am saying. I am sure he will get up and reply. I am looking forward with interest to what he will say, and I am sure the Indian people will be interested. It is far more important that they listen to what the minister has to say than that I listen. I know that the minister in his heart could not have said the nice things