

Supply

federal cabinet and the Prime Minister turned the assignment of striking a royal commission over to an outside group. We will see in a few months time what kinds of positive suggestions will come from the royal commission to deal with the long-term question.

Let me mention what I told the Chief Justice when I met him before he submitted his report to government. I said that the fundamental question we must wrestle with is the question of the destiny of young aboriginal children growing up in Canada today: What will be their future? What can governments and their own people, their own leaders, do to help ensure a future of equal opportunity, equal quality of life and the right to have the same freedoms of choice in society as all other Canadians while preserving the aboriginal languages and cultures and traditions, which are so precious and important to First Nations people? How can we construct a better destiny for the children of the aboriginal peoples.

The first answer is that it is not up to us. We have something we can give and we must continue to give in material ways. However, if we lived in a remote northern community whose population was doubling every 10 years, surrounded by trees and with or without a road, and we were in a modern high school with computers and watching rock videos on television, what would we struggle with inside if we were a teenager thinking about our future? Would we want to get out? Could we afford to stay? If we stayed in that community without work, what would be our destiny? Would it be alcohol, other substance abuse or some of the other social tragedies we hear about?

• (1840)

The fundamental question is: What will be their destiny? I think we all have a responsibility.

I came prepared to talk about our progress on land claims and treaty issues. There is also the hundreds of millions of dollars in additional funds we have committed to increasing the budget for post-secondary education and to improving the sewers and water within Indian communities. There is the package before cabinet now dealing with an enhanced housing program for aboriginal communities and dealing with tragedies like Davis Inlet, Big Cove, and Fox Lake which is in northern Alberta.

I could talk about all the statistics and all the funds. The budget of my department is now more than twice as large as it was in 1985 and it is not nearly adequate. Each year we have had significant increases in our budget at a

time when all other government budgets have been frozen or near to that.

Assuming we can find the financial resources, the real question is the destiny question. It is important that we create a legal framework that is acceptable to First Nations, to native people where they no longer have to live in a sense feeling like subjugated people, subjugated to our Crown, to our laws, to our way of life, to our values and to our system which revolves around the dollar.

I hope the royal commission will give us some more profound wisdom. However, between now and whenever we find the magic formula we must continue to encourage increased levels of education. We must take away the shackles of the Indian Act and paternalism and create a climate where native people are free to risk, to succeed and yes, to fail in their own endeavours. And for their part, when they fail they should not come back to government expecting a solution.

I know we must be a caring society and a caring Parliament but we have to create a climate where social welfare is replaced with the freedom to choose, to succeed and to risk. We should help by providing education and by settling land and treaty issues and then by reaching out the hand of friendship. That is because I sense the one thing that has been lacking and which I find astounding is that in a country with 28 million people there has not been enough person-to-person bonding, where a First Nations person can say: "I really have a friend who is not of my own", and some of us can say the same. I will say that to the hon. member for Western Arctic whom I have come to know, respect, admire and feel great affection for.

When I travel across the country and in and out of aboriginal communities, I think it is such a tragedy that we really live in two worlds. Those of us who have so much to give expect government to do it and we are not prepared to reach out our own hand and offer help as we should.

Ms. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his kind comments.

We all have our parties to which we belong and our partisanship sometimes. However, I think we all recognize the common struggle and we do our best to try to achieve our goals. Sometimes things are a little difficult and a little tense but I think we manage to work