

*Routine Proceedings*

• (1240)

The findings of the Hickling report were not completely positive. The executive summary does include the following statement:

In our opinion, the delay in settling the matter of the return of the remaining original families still at Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord is the only real basis for criticism of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, as far as this project is concerned.

This was the finding of the independent Hickling team. Having said that, however, the report's authors continued by pointing out:

The circumstances that caused this delay have already been explained by several deputy ministers since the claim was first formally raised with the department in 1982.

The Hickling report did suggest that:

—a concrete and definitive statement on what action the department now intends to take on this matter would be most meaningful.

Such a statement has now been provided by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in its response to the third report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs which was tabled yesterday.

In that response, the government has stated that it is prepared to make funding available in the fiscal year 1991-92 to allow any of the Inuit families who were originally relocated, or their descendants remaining in Grise Fiord or Resolute Bay, to return to Inukjuak.

At the same time, the government is prepared to return certain possessions that had to be left behind in Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord when families were returning to Inukjuak in the past, or, if the actual possessions cannot be provided, will provide reimbursement to the people concerned. This will apply whether those people returned on their own or whether they returned under government auspices.

All the independent evidence shows that this project was conceived and implemented with the best of intentions on the part of both government and the Inuit families originally relocated. The evidence shows that the government has since responded honourably to those Inuit who subsequently decided that they wished to return to Inukjuak by financing transportation and housing and now by agreeing to replace lost possessions.

I would like to close by using the words of the team of that wrote the Hickling report which concluded:

We do not see the grounds for an apology by the government for the manner in which the relocation project was conceived, planned and carried out—In our view, to apologize for a wrongdoing it did not commit would constitute deception on the part of the government—It would also imply that the project had not been reasonably successful, whereas this is not the case.

We have listened this morning to a great deal of rhetoric in the House and some of it does not serve the cause of either the Inuit people or the people of the country. I have heard the use of the word "exile", for example, which implies forced compulsion and wrongdoing. This simply was not the case. The government did not force the people to move. They did not compel people to stay. There is no evidence whatsoever of wrongdoing, as indicated by the Hickling report.

Finally, the hon. member for Comox—Alberni used some pretty strong language in his intervention this morning when he accused the government actions as being comparable to those of Stalin. It is not unusual from time to time for members of this House to get a little carried away by their rhetoric, but there is a limit. It seems to me that the hon. member has gone far beyond the limit of what is reasonable and what is logical and what is rational in terms of a rational debate.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member to withdraw his ill-advised remarks and to apologize to this House.

**Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think the member was seriously indicating that I had made any unparliamentary statements with respect to this report. I think when you compare this report with the actual documents available from the Department of Indian Affairs and that are in the hands of the Makivik Corporation, anything I have said in the way of characterizing this report as a fabric of lies is accurate. I was not accusing the minister of lying, but I was suggesting that the minister had been lied to by his own consultants.

I would also suggest that the member herself by characterizing this report as an independent report is misleading the House herself because these consultants were hired by the Department of Indian Affairs. Makivik Corporation was given a choice of selecting one of the department's consultants. They rejected the two that