

*The Address—Mr. Firth*

would like to add my warning that that danger does indeed exist.

It was only a few months ago that a hint of this situation was given when the court house, the seat of justice, at Hay River in the Northwest Territories was blown up. Give us six more years of a colonial type of government in the Northwest Territories, give us a few more years of school and job training without any jobs at the end of the schooling or training, give us five or six more years of people from the southern part of the country running our lives by remote control, give us a few more years of insufficient federal representation and I, or anyone else who knows the north as I do, can guarantee that this country will be in deep trouble in the north.

I do not advocate that the Northwest Territories should not be developed; I do not say that at all. I want to make that very clear. I do want to mention two priorities at this time, and only briefly. The first is that the aboriginal rights and native land claims for that part of Canada must be settled, and settled soon. When I talk about aboriginal rights sometimes I wonder about a land deal made back in 1871 between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian government. I do not know who was guilty of the misdemeanor, but some deal took place between three parties without the fourth party involved having any say in it.

We should be allowed to have a more fully elected government in the Northwest Territories, a more responsible and fully elected government. Then, and only then, can orderly development begin. In the meantime, I believe it is important that a good prospectors program, a good incentive program for exploration and prospecting work, should be encouraged at this time in the north. But it should be carried out very carefully, and the people of the Northwest Territories should have some say about where such work can take place. I say this because I think we should find out once and for all if we do have a big storehouse of oil, gas and minerals in that part of the world, to be developed by Canadians for Canadians. On the subject of oil and gas pipelines, I think it might be wise at this time to take a more careful look at the situation and abandon the idea of building a large pipeline, possibly two pipelines, before talking with the people in that area. I think the people of that part of the country should be consulted before such work or such study is undertaken.

I also think we should look at the feasibility of building a railway line rather than a pipeline, and of course, Mr. Speaker, this all would be done only after the settlement of aboriginal rights and the native land claims of the people up there. I do not think the idea of a pipeline is wise at this time, but to some extent I would go along with the idea of building a railway. Canadians are good at building railways, I think, but pipelines are so specialized in nature. There are many arguments in favour of a railway.

• (1730)

I should like now to mention a few pressing needs of the Northwest Territories. One is in the area of housing. I should like to see some funds made available as soon as possible to the Northwest Territories government in order

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to fully implement the report of the Northwest Territories Council task force on housing. This report was adopted by the territorial council in October of last year in Frobisher Bay, but I understand it has become hung up somewhere along the line.

To point out the desperate need for housing in many parts of the Northwest Territories, I should like to read an open letter addressed to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories which was printed in a recent issue of "*News of the North*" which is published in Yellowknife. This letter reads as follows:

Dear Sir:

I feel compelled as both a social worker and a resident of the Northwest Territories to bring to your attention a matter which is causing me great concern. You have no doubt been aware for some time of the critical shortage of low cost housing in Frobisher Bay as well as the terrible substandard conditions of some of our present housing. However, in the event that this matter has not been brought to your attention, I would like to share some of my observations with you.

As a growing community of 2,500 people and a reported growth centre in the Baffin region, I do not understand why there have been no new houses built in Frobisher Bay this year. In fact we have lost six houses to fire this year and these have not been replaced or repaired and now stand empty. People are continually moving to Frobisher from the outlying settlements and yet there is no housing for them. It is not unusual to find new families of eight or nine people forced to move into the already crowded homes of residents where they must live in the hope that a house will become vacant. In the last little while there has been a large influx of young single people coming here looking for jobs; not only are they not finding jobs, but they are forced to sleep wherever they find room.

Not only is there a critical need for new housing merely to accommodate our expanding population, but the existing housing situation is a disaster. A great many people live in condemned substandard housing. In one matchbox which is certainly no larger than ten feet by twelve feet there resides a 70-year old lady, here two grandchildren; and three other related adults. In another one of these units which should have been destroyed years ago, a mother and her two children live with plywood over the windows and very poor heating. In all these units there is only one exit which is separated from the rest of the house by the stove creating a serious fire hazard. In many units plastic of plywood covers the windows and doors to keep out the bitter wind.

Maintenance is almost non-existent. People must wait weeks and even months to have a door or window fixed. Even in some of the larger homes the residents must use gas stoves and patchwork to keep out the wind and cold. One older fellow had to leave the shack which was his home after a storm left six inches of snow in his room. In some houses I have visited, the temperature is in the fifties and people must wear coats to keep warm. Contrary to what many people might think these are not isolated situations, at least not in Frobisher.

The implication from this lack of adequate housing is reflected in the life of the community. One of the highest T.B. rates in the world; seven serious fires this year involving three deaths, drinking is rampant, and past the critical point; family problems have compounded and dissatisfaction among the young people is growing like a cancer. And yet—no one appears to care.

We are constantly hearing about all the positive growth in Frobisher. We receive a one million dollar ice arena. Someone is building a \$20,000 royal suite in the apartment complex for visiting dignitaries complete with \$900 tea settings and \$3,000 dining room suites. Yet the local people must live in dehumanizing, degrading and dangerous housing. Is this somebody's master plan for Frobisher?

I know you get a large number of invitations for tours, but next time you are in Frobisher give me one hour of your time and I will