

What is to be done?

White paper is worse than Indian Act

By HAROLD CARDINAL

This is an abridged version of a speech given at Glendon College two weeks ago by Cardinal, a Cree Indian from Alberta and a leading spokesman for the rights of native peoples in Canada. He is also the author of *The Unjust Society*, a discussion of the tragedy of Canada's Indians.

A year and a half ago, when we met in this hall, our people were in the process of what were called 'consultation meetings'.

There, we were to embark on a new path to seek, in partnership with the federal government, those ways and means which would help our people alleviate the difficult problems that they face in all aspects of their life.

At that time we reflected a certain dissatisfaction with the consultation process.

Even then, we felt that there were indications that the consultation process was being carried out with less than the sincerity which was being publicly proclaimed by different government officials.

Intensive discussion

In Alberta we spent three months in intensive local meetings with the people and local leaders, to discuss what it was we wanted from the federal government and what it was we were going to propose.

After those three intensive months of consultation amongst ourselves, we entered into a week long deliberation, where we identified the common aspirations of our people in Alberta.

At that time we elected six representatives, to represent the province of Alberta in the national consultation meeting in Ottawa, where we were to meet with Indian representatives from all parts of the country.

We met for five intensive days of discussion.

At the end of that national consultation meeting, there was a unanimous decision — there was unity in spirit and in fact.

We made it very clear to the minister of Indian Affairs (Jean Chretien) what it was that we wanted.

It was made explicitly clear to the federal government that the most basic problem that had to be tackled and solved was that of the

credibility of the federal government, in as far as our people were concerned.

The WHITE Paper

In June of 1969, the minister delivered in the House of Commons a paper which I have called the WHITE Paper, outlining the position of the government in relation to the Indians of the country.

Upon intensive examination by ourselves and our resource people of the WHITE Paper, it became clear to us that we had just gone through an exercise in futility for the course of one year.

It is probably the most frustrating experience an individual can undergo, when after all the work that you have done ... that the people who you are supposed to be talking to had not listened, or if they had, had not cared.

They had made up their minds before we began to talk to them.

One of the most ironic statements, in fact, one of the most ridiculous statements of the WHITE Paper is the impression that it tries to give to the Canadian people that the contents of the paper were in response to things said by Indians throughout the consultation process.

As far as we are concerned the consultation meetings were nothing but a massive public relations campaign that enabled the federal government to say that it had 'consulted' our people.

The situation has changed drastically since I was here last.

Cultural genocide

The Indian people of this country face the most serious threat of extinction, of legalized cultural genocide, the betrayal of all treaties, and all honour that had been attached to those treaties, and the destruction of our lands, our resources, our homes.

It is this threat that has angered and frustrated Indian leaders at all levels.

The authors of the WHITE Paper were probably the most expert propagandists that this country has ever created.

The government relies on a lot of doubletalk and doubleplay in trying to convince the Canadian public in its mythical concept of 'equality'.



They say that Indian people are poor today because they have been discriminated against, legally and constitutionally.

While many Indian people would tend to agree that there has been legal discrimination, Indian people would intensely disagree with the concept that so-called 'constitutional discrimination' has resulted in the plight of the Indian today.

Indeed, it is our feeling that if the terms of the treaties had been honoured, many of the social and economic problems that we face today would not be here.

Through the public relations companies that they (federal government) have hired, we who oppose the WHITE Paper, as Indian people, can be accused of shrinking from our responsibilities as citizens, of wanting to continue to be 'wards' of the government.

Those white people who support our position are accused of being for discrimination and against equality.

And yet this is the furthest from the truth.

We agree that there must be equality, but it cannot be theoretical equality.

We have seen the equality which has been extended to the Metis of Canada. We have seen many instances of where their plight is worse than the plight of the treaty Indian.

And yet, if we are to believe the government's WHITE Paper, the Metis, because they have no legal discrimination against them, have equality with all Canadians, and are therefore well off.

The facts of the matter point to another direction.

We cannot accept a concept of equality which tells us we are going to have the opportunity and the right to receive welfare from the same welfare desk as all Canadian poor people.

We think we are entitled to expect more and we are entitled to want more for our children, our people.

Land ownership

What would probably be one of the most hilarious sections of the WHITE Paper, if it were not so serious, and the Canadian public were not so gullible, is the section which introduces the concept of land ownership to Indian people.

The government says that the status of the land has had a lot to do with the poverty of the Indian because they have not had access to the normal channels of the lending agencies.

Therefore, what they propose to do is set up transitional legislation, on a temporary basis, where land ownership and land control would be transferred to the band level and then Indian people would be given ownership of their own land.

Theoretically, that sounds fine. For people who are not aware of the situation, they feel that you could not ask for a better deal.

Yet, when one considers the practical aspects, one has to come up with a different conclusion.

What does the concept of land ownership as enunciated by the WHITE Paper mean to the Indian living on his reserve?

Because of the legal set-up, all Indian people are entitled equally to reserve land.

In Alberta we looked at what this meant in terms of our reserves.

When we compared the population of our reserves to the land base that is available within the confines of our reserves, we find that probably the larger reserves would have about 70 acres per individual.

The average probably ranges anywhere from 3 to 10 acres per individual.

10 acres useless

So we said "Fine! At last we're going to own 10 acres of land."

But then we wonder what we are going to do with this land. What kind of living can you make from 10 acres of land, especially when you consider that from the same government, in another department, that if we rely on an

agricultural base, that same government tells us that we need at least 600 acres of land in order to make that an economic unit, in other words to make a living.

We're far short with 10 acres.

If there was the proper research done, we would probably find that the taxation assessed by federal, provincial and municipal governments would be far above the possible revenue that the 10 acres of land could produce.

And if we could not pay our taxes, then the government would take our lands away.

So this is what we mean when we say that our reserves and lands are being threatened.

The government has worked out this devious plan to do a number of things beside what I have discussed.

By being able to do away with Indian lands (because if all reserves were individually owned, they would cease to have the status of reserves), they would also be able to legally define the word Indian out of existence.

This performs a very astute political service for the federal government — it allows them to transfer Indians to the jurisdiction of the provinces without changing the Canadian constitution.

The government knows that because of the opposition of the Indians and the provincial governments to this transfer, that for many, many years they will not be able to get agreement to change the constitution.

But they have figured out another way where they won't have to touch the constitution, through this concept of land ownership.

And yet, the honorable minister has the audacity to say that he does not understand the WHITE Paper, to say that we have not read the WHITE Paper carefully.

Possibly his problem is that we read his WHITE Paper too damn carefully.

Uninformed public

But how do we convince a Canadian public that is not too knowledgeable of our situation?

A Canadian public that is gullible, especially when the sacred cows of Canadian society are thrown before them — the sacred cows of 'equality' and land ownership.

How do we deal with many Canadians sincerely asking themselves: "What do these damn Indians want; we offer them equality and they don't want it — we offer them responsibility as citizens and they don't want it?"

Our problem now is what do we do to reach such a Canadian public?

GRADUATING IN 1970?

ARTS AND COMMERCE STUDENTS INTERESTED IN CAREERS IN

- ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT
- ACTUARIAL SCIENCE
- SALES AND SALES MANAGEMENT

will be interviewed at the Placement Office

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27



GETTING ENGAGED?



DIAMONDS MAY BE A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND.....BUT YOU PAY THE BILL.

Most people find it very difficult to determine good value in the purchase of a Diamond Ring. There are Guidelines to go by to help you make this important investment. Our free booklet "The Day You Buy A Diamond" will help you to establish these values. Phone, write or drop in for your copy without obligation.

Hugh Proctor & Co.

DIAMOND DEALERS
131 BLOOR W., STE. 416
921-7702