

Indian Affairs

I would like to quote from a brief which was put before the standing committee on July 8, 1980, by the National Indian Brotherhood:

The failure of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to serve our interest has, perhaps, been inevitable, given its origins, its other obligations and the need of any bureaucracy to perpetuate itself. Were there no right inherent in our peoplehood to create our own Indian government, the department's continued mismanagement of our affairs would surely create such a right out of pure self-defence. The government often says we should negotiate from need rather than from right. We need to remove that impediment to the free exercise of our rights.

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I think that says a lot about the way the National Indian Brotherhood represents all native groups in this country. I think it tells us what they feel about the department which was created to assist native people become self-reliant, in other words, dependent only upon themselves. As we now deal with the constitution of this nation, surely the job of that department is to wind itself up.

What has happened as a result of this department becoming smug and complacent in its dealings with native people? This department has not come up with any new ideas or initiatives to deal with the problems that members of Parliament see. I ask what has happened? After all these years, infant mortality is still four times higher than the national average. It is significant to note that since 1970, even though pre-natal and post-natal care for the Inuit and the Indians is as good as it is for the rest of the population, this figure of infant mortality, being four times higher than the national average, has not changed.

Violent deaths among natives are three times higher than the national average. Suicides are six times higher than the national average. In my opinion, that means many native people feel there is no hope left. They must feel there is nothing for them in the future of this country. As a result, there is more violence and more use of alcohol among the natives than there is among the rest of the population in Canada. Only 20 per cent of Indian children stay in school to grade 12. If a person does not have a high school education today, his chances of bettering himself or getting a proper job are much less. This is particularly true when you belong to a minority group.

The largest reserve in Alberta is in the city of Edmonton. I use the words "largest reserve" advisedly. There are more native people in the city of Edmonton than on any reserve in the province. I ask hon. members if they know how many native students graduated from grade 12 last year in Edmonton? The answer is that only two such students graduated from high school last year.

Unemployment among Indians is the worst in the nation. Some 25 per cent to 30 per cent of the Indian population is constantly unemployed, and many times this figure rises to 85 per cent or 90 per cent of the population. Many programs are aimed at the native people, for instance, the LEAP program, the CMTP, the DMITP, Outreach, the Summer Youth Employment program, FLIP, and so forth. Just recently \$10 million was put forward for native programs. But none of these

programs meets the problem. The problem has to be met from within. Economic development has to take place on the reserves by native people themselves, for their interests, otherwise nothing will succeed. This fact has been proven over and over again over the years.

Indian life expectancy is ten years less than that for non-Indians. I find that statistic appalling. We have spent \$240 million a year on welfare. What has it done? It has only increased the dependency and reinforced dependency by natives on government. It has not in any way encouraged self-reliance among the native people. Nearly half of the Indian homes in Canada do not have running water or sewers, yet the department is spending some \$40 million a year on housing. Again, this money is not meeting the problem. \$40 million will cover only sewer and water in many reserves in one province of this country.

I can use the example of a reserve in northern Alberta. The people realized they were not getting adequate housing through these programs, so the reserve decided to build homes themselves. People on the reserve asked the province to assist them by providing power saws and the gasoline to run them, and for one expert to show them how to build log houses. All this was done and with tremendous success. New homes are being put up in this northern reserve. These sorts of ideas could be used. Why is the department not doing anything?

What do the young native people think who grow up on reserves and who live adjacent to projects with \$80,000 and \$90,000 homes? What do these young native people think when they have no running water and have to walk out to the outhouse behind with the half moon, when just across the fence there are Canadians living in beautiful homes? I certainly wonder what they must think about the future and what life has to offer them as they grow older. These statistics we are talking about today represent a social disintegration and a cultural decay in this country.

Economically native people are worse off and they are becoming more dependent on government. More than half of the Indian population have grown dependent on social assistance and welfare over the years. Only one-third were dependent on assistance twenty years ago. However, there have been some successes.

There have been some advances in the area of economic development. We have spent a lot of money and we have had many excellent people working in that area. But there have been many failures as well. I shall mention only a few because there is no point in mentioning more. I was a member of a committee which studied examples which recurred over and over. The Auditor General of Canada, after seeing these examples, felt compelled to make a report and chastised the department for being unable to care for the money it had under its control. The examples I will use are mostly in my own province because I am more familiar with them.

The department spent \$6.1 million out of a total of \$9.1 million in a company called Alberta. Aspen. The Indian people got only 20 per cent of that company. The Indians spent over 70 per cent of the money and yet they only got 20 per cent of