

Private Members' Business

of services that ought to be provided for native people was not given to them.

The second area is education. It is known that the schools are lacking in research. Not only are the schools lacking but the equipment for these schools is lacking. As well, the number of qualified teachers and teachers familiar with the cultural, language and sensitivity of native youth is absent.

On many reserves schools offer education only to a grade eight level. How can we expect them in the future to be as good as we are? That ought to be our challenge as we ought to provide for them as good an education as any other Canadian across the country. When the drop-out rate is very high, when only about 7 per cent of them—those between the ages of 20 and 24—are able to attend university levels, there is something wrong with our system in this country.

The availability of the services and the availability of opportunities ought to be open to all. Since education is a necessary tool to break the cycle of dependency, when that education is not attainable, then the dependency of our native population will continue to be present and that, of course, does not speak well for our country.

Hence, aboriginal people need a fully-integrated aboriginal education system that would care for and teach native children from a native perspective. Universities must be established throughout and should be made accessible to them. Do they have to travel far to obtain a university education? I think we can make universities reach them rather than their trying to reach universities to make the situation a more positive one.

The second point I would like to raise is that of employment. The opportunities for them, of course, are limited. Inherently, if one has a lesser level of education the opportunities will be less for them rather than having a greater level of training. So again, there is the vicious cycle. In fact, most recent equity reports have told us that the representation of natives in the employment force is not as much as we would like it to be. In other words, they are under-represented in employment and this is even true in the federal service where the federal government truly can have an immediate leadership role.

• (1730)

In conclusion, it is obvious that the native population and the native youth, in particular, are suffering in the areas of health, education and employment. It is vital for the government to develop special initiatives to respond to these needs. These needs must be developed and carried with full participation of native Canadians, otherwise the initiative may not see its full productive fruition.

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I would like to thank my colleague from Nunatsiaq for introducing this motion for debate. I think it is a critical motion and one that the House should take seriously. I hope that it would take it more seriously given the number of speakers we have here in this House.

In winding up his motion, the member has indicated that special initiatives are required and that those initiatives should be taken in consultation with the native people. It is very important that we recognize that the solutions to these problems require special initiatives and that they cannot have any hope of success without consultation with the native people of Canada.

In introducing this motion back in November the member outlined a number of statistics that most of us as Canadians should find absolutely intolerable. These statistics related to infant mortality and the fact that infant mortality among native newborns is twice that of children in the whole population. He went on to tell us about a whole series of problems with respect to tuberculosis and respiratory diseases.

The member for Delta has just indicated that suicide is a serious problem among young people in native communities all across Canada, not simply in the north, but on Vancouver Island, the area of Canada I serve. The suicide rate among native children is extremely high, especially among native young men. Something must be done. Nothing can be done about this problem unless it is done in consultation with the native people themselves, keeping their particular experiences in mind.

I would like to point out that when native communities examine the problem of suicide they are able to come to conclusions which best reflect their culture. Having developed that view of the problem, they are also able to