

● (2215)

In conclusion, in spite of all the rhetoric about consultation, about giving Indian people more responsibility to administer their own affairs, the government continues to keep them on a very short string. The department is sloppy in getting funds to Indian bands in time. It expects Indian bands to operate in 1980 with 1975 funding. The department diverts funds that should be available to band projects. It uses these funds to cover deficits in other parts of the department. The plain fact is that Indian bands are being made the scapegoat for the inefficiency of the department and for the government's failure to secure adequate funds so that at least some of these funds will get through the gauntlet of the bureaucracy and reach the Indian people themselves. In conclusion, I would like to read a few words from a letter a band manager wrote to the minister. I quote:

You see Mr. Minister it's like if you made home-made beer. You and your department will drink the top part of the bottle and give the remaining to the Indians. This is exactly what's happening with the funding too.

Mr. Ron Irwin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Mr. Speaker, I often think that if there is a scapegoat, it has to be the Department of Indian Affairs which quietly goes about its business, trying to do the best it can, not always to perfection but certainly not with the incompetence as suggested by the hon. member.

On April 15, 1980, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Munro) met with the National Indian Brotherhood concerning terms and conditions for funding to Indian bands. As a result of this meeting, the minister announced an extension to July 15 to allow time for further consultation with Indian people to work out mutually acceptable financial arrangements. During that three-month period, the minister met with the chairman of the Union of New Brunswick Indians and reached an agreement on May 26.

With the understanding that bands would, as they had in the past, continue to meet information and accounting requirements through provision of a band council resolution or other appropriate instrument, the following points were agreed upon in regard to contribution arrangements.

First, an annual audit will continue to be provided to the department by bands. Second, bands will set out in their expenditure plans and by program their budget requirements for the fiscal year, for example, housing, roads, education. Another point agreed upon is that bands must indicate their cash requirements on a quarterly basis against the aforementioned expenditure plan and, in advance, their cash requirements and expenditures for subsequent quarters. Bands also have the option of continuing to be financed on a quarterly basis, which is the maximum period allowable for cash advances.

It should be mentioned that these points were agreed upon between the department and Indian bands in Canada as general guidelines. This does not, however, preclude the option of individual bands negotiating a financial arrangement with the government which better suits their own needs.

Adjournment Debate

Hon. members will be aware that the Department of Indian Affairs had in the past received complaints from Parliament, the Auditor General and the Indian people themselves, alleging inadequate accounting procedures and negligence over expenditure of federal funds. Prior to April, 1979, Treasury Board submissions specified the terms and conditions relating to each contribution activity, such as education, social assistance and so on. This practice resulted in several contribution agreements for any one band and each had to be controlled, monitored and accounted for individually. As of April, 1979, however, terms and conditions are now based on classes of activities. This means that a single contribution can be made by the department to a band which covers all activities managed by the band, thereby reducing the need for the control and accounting over separate contributions.

Under these new reporting procedures approved by Treasury Board, the bands must now submit financial reports to the department on at least a quarterly basis, specifying year-to-date expenditures and forecast total annual expenditures.

There is much more I would like to say, but this is only a three-minute period. The point I want to make is that we want to do a good job. At the same time, we have a fiscal responsibility, as do the bands. After all, it is the taxpayers' money. We have to answer for it, as do the bands.

● (2220)

THE CONSTITUTION—CONSULTATIONS WITH INDIAN GROUPS

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, on October 17 I asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) when the Indian and other native groups in Canada would be consulted about their constitutional proposals and whether the constitutional proposals of October 6 would be amended to entrench Indian rights. While the Prime Minister said that Indians and other native people would be consulted on constitutional matters that concern them and that he was anxious to find ways to better protect their rights, regrettably he also said that this would be done only when the constitution is patriated to Canada.

This is not acceptable. If we can entrench certain rights regarding the French and English languages, fundamental freedoms, democratic rights, mobility rights, equalization and, now, the right to resources, then surely there is no reason why we cannot entrench at this time certain basic Indian and Inuit rights as well.

Some government spokesmen have argued that article 24 of the constitutional proposals protects native rights. But that section is extremely inadequate and is the barest minimum. Francophones of this country would never tolerate a similar proposal to protect their rights, and the Indians and Inuit have no reason to accept it either. The aboriginal people of this land want their basic collective rights entrenched in the present proposed charter. If they must wait until after patriation, they may have to wait for many years and then may never get the protection they want and need.

We must recognize that it will not be easy to pass amendments under the proposed amending formula. The Indian and