

what it would take to move the government in the right direction.

There has been a great improvement with regard to Indian affairs over the days of the 19th century and the situation that existed when I first came here. The idea contained in this bill is important. It is a good idea. It is the simple idea of bringing people together and exposing them to success stories. I am convinced these success stories will influence industries in the north to change their hiring practices and attitude toward the hiring of Indians.

We should encourage these industries, financially if necessary, to be more flexible in allowing days off and so on. Instead of hiring 12 men they might hire 18 men, and allow some rotation. One thing the public service seems to forget is that once an Indian or Eskimo male is in receipt of a regular salary his wife becomes accustomed to that regular salary, and it is merely a matter of time, when this regular salary is coming in, until there is pressure from the other side of the household for the man to continue in his job. This pressure in time would be much greater than it would be after a month or two of employment.

If one succeeds in employing an Indian for a year or so, then the wife takes over acting as the pressure on his man to continue working for industry. There is no doubt in my mind, if we can get more people into the labour force in the north by exercising more flexibility on the part of management, that we can substantially reduce the number of unemployed Indian and Eskimo males in this country.

I hope that finally, after ten years of suggestion, the government will take some sensible action. If the government does not wish to do the job itself at least it should offer the National Indian Brotherhood the money so that it can handle the program. Surely we can move on this suggestion now. Whether or not this bill passes today is not important to me. However, I think at least the subject matter of the bill should be referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I would be satisfied if the subject matter of the bill were referred to the committee because I believe, although I am not sure, the committee is seized of the annual report of the department, and therefore it really has the latitude now to go into all the matters about which I have been speaking.

● (1620)

So long as there is agreement in the House today, I would be satisfied with either the bill or its subject matter being referred to the committee. I want some action from the government on a matter that is long overdue.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not want to kill this bill. I think its passage is long overdue, and I congratulate the hon. member for Laprairie (Mr. Watson) for introducing it. I have long known of his interest in the subject of the proper education of people in the north who will later be employed. I am sure that the government will accept his suggestion and the bill will be referred to the committee.

I would just like to say, in relation to the training and employment of people in the north, particularly Indian and Eskimo people, that in my view we have always imposed on them our type of education so that we could

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get the most use out of them, and so that the development of the north could provide them most effectively with jobs. In effect we have provided employment in the high Arctic only when it met our needs, and was to our advantage rather than theirs. We have trained bulldozer operators and all sorts of construction people, but when a job is over, unless a person is willing to move out of that area he can find absolutely no other employment.

I find also that we have never really considered the work ethic of the native population in the north. I believe that it is considerably different from ours because their background is different. They are nomadic people, closely associated with nature and living in and from their natural environment, which results in a different work ethic than ours.

I would like to make a suggestion for the committee to consider. I suggest that we establish a work pool, either through a co-operative or some other agency, which would provide those people with a work force and the authority to allocate employment. It seems to me that this would give the opportunity to some people to work for two or three days, after which another person might take over the job for another two or three days. In this way these people would be able to carry on their hunting or fishing on alternative periods. This might be a way of working that they would prefer. We should establish an agency which would allow them to provide employment, and which would make decisions as to who goes to work on what day. In this way we would not be destroying the ability of the native people to look after themselves when a particular job is finished.

I have known persons who have been employed, particularly in construction, who have not been able to obtain employment in any other field when the construction was ended, and it was not possible for them to go back to earning their living as they did previously.

I think we should establish industries specifically designated for the undeveloped areas of the north. We should develop work opportunities, associated with our reservations, that are oriented toward the wishes and lifestyles of those people so that they can develop in their own environment and earn a living in their own area, not in our manner but in the manner which they choose. I hope we will give some consideration to letting them work according to their own work ethic, and that we will establish an agency which will be able to tell the Department of Regional Economic Expansion and its provincial counterparts what type of assistance they need and what type of help we can provide for them with regard to employment.

I agree with the hon. member for Laprairie that we should not provide our native people with what suits us only, but rather give them the type of training opportunities that best fits their need. It seems to me that no one can make that decision for them better than they themselves. So I hope that this bill is referred to the committee and that we will consider the points I have made.

I have been here for quite a number of years, and I have always been shocked at our failure to provide for the needs of the indigent people in the north when we go there to develop the area. We make pious resolutions that 50 per cent of those employed in the north will be native people, but we have never lived up to them. This has not been