

The Address—Mr. Firth

last 11 months, but in all that time there has been no liaison between it and the only federal member representing that part of Canada, representing one-third of Canada.

That was the situation until about February 28 when at last there was some contact. I, personally, went over to see this office, and for the information of hon. members I will supply them with its phone number and address. The phone number is 992-7289, and it is located at Room 328 in the Centennial Towers on Laurier Avenue West. I went over there and spoke to the director general in charge of this office. He did not seem to be doing very much directing, or liaison work, or anything. I told him that I usually receive a large number of visitors to my office, people seeking information about the Northwest Territories. I asked him if I should not refer some of these visitors to his office to receive such information. He said he really did not encourage that sort of thing.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Firth: What kind of liaison is that? Anyway, hon. members now have his phone number and address, and I hope they will take advantage of that information.

I was saddened to note that there was no mention in the Speech from the Throne about possible legislation regarding the native population of Canada, and in particular regarding the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I have some figures here which hon. members might be interested in, and that I think are important to mention. In the period from 1963 to 1974, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development spent something like \$1,813,898,000, on the approximately 250,000 treaty Indians and Eskimo people in Canada. Mr. Speaker, this is approximately \$7,252 for each man, woman and child for whom the department is responsible. I think that is a very important point and hon. members should think about it.

● (1500)

But what has been the result of spending this approximately \$1,800,000,000? We have some highly paid staff in the department, but for the Indian and Eskimo people in the land there is still extreme poverty. The first citizens of our land are still living in poverty; there is a very high dropout rate in high school; very few people reach university and there is a terrible housing situation in the country, especially in the north. Not long ago I was talking to some people who live under such conditions. Three families live in one two-bedroom house and they have to eat and sleep in shifts. There is no running water or such facilities. The money has not provided a meaningful program to help the native population break out of the poverty cycle and that is something which hon. members should think about very seriously.

I should like to mention something about the Indian Brotherhood in the Northwest Territories. After a meeting between the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the president of the Indian Brotherhood in Yellowknife on January 18, there were some news reports to the effect that the Indian Brotherhood and the government of Canada were now ready, willing and able to sit down and negotiate the land claims of the treaty Indians of the Northwest Territories. These reports were not

[Mr. Firth.]

exactly true. The fact is that for some time the Northwest Territories Indian Brotherhood has been trying to prepare for such negotiations. However, the Brotherhood does not have the resources to do so. The government has publicly announced support for such meetings to take place, but I say the government has not made sufficient funds available to the Brotherhood to enable them to prepare to negotiate their claims. At the present rate of progress of the negotiations between the Indian Brotherhood and the government of Canada, I would guess that the native people of the Northwest Territories will not be ready to sit down at the negotiating table for another three to five years.

As an example of some of the problems that the Indian Brotherhood runs into, the Wrigley people, a small group on the Mackenzie River, asked the minister for some funds to set up meetings between the out villages along the route of the proposed pipeline or railway or highway or whatever, to discuss the project. They were turned down. Mr. Speaker, I do not think that is negotiation and it will not work.

There is another matter of very great importance to the Northwest Territories—that colonial part of Canada, that underdeveloped part of Canada, that part of Canada which is most important, I think, in terms of natural resources. Because the fact many people are talking about pipelines, railways and whatever, in the field of development, and because there may be a substantial increase in population in the area, serious consideration should be given to more federal representation from the north in this House. There is, indeed, a great need now for more federal representation, but once again there has been no mention of any changes in this throne speech. I believe that the people of the north deserve and have a right to more federal representation. They should have a fair say in what is happening or may happen in the north in the next little while.

Let us just take a few minutes to think about one aspect of the present system of a single member representing the Northwest Territories. Not too long ago this House decided that members may have a constituency office. In a constituency of 1,350,000 square miles with 75 or 80 communities, where would you put that office? This is just one example of the difficulties faced by the people of the north.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have very much more to say. At this time I should like to ask for a ruling from the Chair. There are a few minutes left of the time allotted to me. I do not know exactly what the rules are regarding this, but I should like to ask that, during the remaining time allotted to me, hon. members of this House be allowed to sit and think about some of the points I have made.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I suppose the Chair should recognize another hon. member. I recognize the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia).

Mr. Broadbent: There is a Liberal getting up. He refuses to think.